

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMONS

EMINENT SCOTTISH DIVINES.

VOL. III.

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P R E F A C E.

HAVING brought the third volume of the SCOTTISH PULPIT to a close, it occurs to us to say a few words to our numerous subscribers, contributors, and well-wishers. We feel confident that those who hailed the appearance of this work as novel in its plan and execution, as excellent in its tendency and design, as a regularly returning and weekly repast of rich, intellectual, moral and religious instruction, will still gladly avail themselves of what we shall afford them in subsequent volumes. We feel equally confident, that those clergymen who have kindly assisted us in our important undertaking will not withhold their support; for, though the work is now firmly established as one of the standard periodicals of the day, and though we have ample means of continuing it upon independent grounds, we yet feel very grateful for the contributions of many whose names we are not permitted to mention, and know too well how to appreciate such favours not to wish a continuance and extension of them. Our numerous well-wishers we know are upon the increase. We have supplied them with Sunday reading at a very moderate expense.

The SCOTTISH PULPIT took the lead among the earliest of the cheap periodicals of the day, and has survived the most of its competitors, while in neatness of external form and appearance it has not been surpassed, if equalled, by any that still survive. It has higher claims. Its topics are not those of mere history, curiosity, or amusement, but embrace the vital interests of mankind both in this life and in that which is to come. While the importance of its *materiel* is thus greater than that of any other periodical, the SCOTTISH PULPIT is altogether an original work, and in this respect, ranks far above the selections and compilations with which the press at present groans. These qualities our numerous well-wishers know our work possesses; and what has been done in time past is the best guarantee for what shall be done in future. We promise the same unremitting attention to procure them variety and excellence—nay, more, an enlarged experience gives us reason to hope that our fourth volume will have still higher claims to public support than any of the three that have preceded it. Extensive arrangements have been made so as to present the purchasers of the ensuing volume with sound theological talent it exists throughout the length and breadth of the land.

The present volume contains upwards of seventy Sermons by the most eminent Divines of the present day. Some of those whose sermons have been inserted, and which will be read by posterity, have, since the commencement of our work, paid the debt of nature; others are of great age, and cannot long, in the natural course of things, survive; while many are yet in all the vigour of manhood, and have, to all human appearance, the promise of many coming years of usefulness.

Among those who have yielded their place to others, but whose productions still survive them in the SCOTTISH PULPIT, may be named Dr. INGLIS of Edinburgh, long distinguished as a leader in the highest Ecclesiastical Court; Dr. BELFRAGE of Falkirk; and Drs. DICK and M'LEAN of Glasgow; the Rev. Messrs. MARIOTT, JOHNSTONE, and MARR, of Edinburgh; the Rev. Mr. ROBERTSON of South Leith; and the Rev. Mr. GEDDES of Glasgow, whose portrait is the frontispiece to the present volume, and of whom we have presented our readers with a brief memoir. Some there are whose sermons have not been inserted in our work, but of whom mention has been made in funeral discourses; and among these may be mentioned the Rev. Messrs. LIMONT and NISBET of Edinburgh. Several clerical translations and preferments too have taken place since the commencement of our labours. Dr. DEWAR has been translated from Glasgow to Aberdeen, where he is Principal of Marischall College. The Rev. Mr. BUCHANAN has been translated from Saltoun to Glasgow, where he is minister of the Tron Church. The Rev. Mr. CUNNINGHAM has been translated from Greenock to Edinburgh, where he is minister of the College Church, in the room of Mr. TAIT, who was deposed from the office of the ministry, in consequence of his heretical opinions. Dr. P. M'FARLAN has been translated from St. Enoch's Church, Glasgow, to the West Parish of Greenock. The Rev. Mr. ROXBURGH, late a probationer in Glasgow, is now stationed as a minister in Dundee. The SCOTTISH PULPIT contains Sermons by all these gentlemen before their preferment, as it does of the Rev. Messrs. TURNER, PATERSON, and KING, after their promotion to Glasgow. What changes may take place by death or translation, during the further progress of our work, are known only to the Almighty. We shall ever hear of clerical preferment with pleasure, when it is the reward of merit; and when the stroke of death cuts off a useful life, we shall be the first to publish their funeral discourses, which, while they pay the tribute of respect to departed worth, are mainly intended for the benefit of a surviving, but mourning, congregation.

MEMOIR

REV. JOHN GEDDES.

THE Frontispiece to the present Volume of the SCOTTISH PULPIT is a Portrait of the late Rev. JOHN GEDDES, minister of St. Andrew's Church, Glasgow :

“ A skilful workman he
In God's great moral vineyard.”

The Rev. John Geddes was born in the town of Moffat, Dumfries-shire, in March, 1793. His parents were distinguished for their piety, and early directed the course of his education with a view to his becoming a minister of Christ. His own mind was very early impressed with a sense of religion; and when many around him of his own age were spending their days in trifling amusements, he was carefully storing his mind with useful knowledge and the principles of religion. With the consent of his parents he attended a Sabbath evening school, and, in after life, he took a lively interest in promoting the prosperity of such institutions. So highly had he been esteemed by the Sabbath school teacher of his native town, that, after his death, he was honoured, by those concerned, as a chief mourner in conveying his remains to the grave. Thus devoted to the Lord by his parents and by his own inclinations, he was entered on a course of preparatory classical education; and, leaving the Grammar School about the fourteenth year of his age, he became a student in the University of Edinburgh. Fond of pursuing learned studies at that early period of life, it has been allowed by those who had the best opportunity of knowing, that he engaged in these pursuits with avidity and exemplary diligence, and that, by persevering assiduity, he made respectable progress in

trial in the usual form, and ordained to the office of the holy ministry on the 9th February, 1821. The manner in which Dr. Findlay and the patrons of the parish acted on this occasion, in so liberally consulting the feelings of the congregation, met with the universal approbation of the community; and Mr. Geddes was kindly congratulated by his numerous friends on his being promoted to the more immediate oversight of so extensive a parish. Among others of his friends in the ministry, the Rev. Dr. A. Thomson of Edinburgh assisted at the ordination, and remaining with him till the following Sabbath, he introduced him to his congregation as their stated pastor, by an eloquent and most impressive discourse from the words of the Apostle in writing to the Philippians, "For me to live is Christ," &c. In the afternoon of the same day, Mr. Geddes, as introductory to entering on his pastoral work, delivered a suitable discourse on the words of the apostle Paul, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." His reverend friend having in the forenoon recommended him with affectionate regard to the attention of the large congregation assembled, as their pastor entering on a field of arduous labour, he himself with strong and kindly feeling declared his sentiments and views explicitly regarding the doctrines of the Gospel, and their practical tendency, and with the fortitude and resolution of a devoted servant of Christ, avowed his determination to "know nothing among his people saving Jesus Christ and him crucified."

Dr. Findlay dying about six weeks after Mr. Geddes' ordination, the whole pastoral duties of the High Church of Paisley and its populous and extensive parish devolved upon him. On the discharge of these duties, Mr. Geddes entered with much spirit and resolution. For the first two years after his ordination, with a bodily frame apparently healthy and vigorous, he did not seem to feel any abatement of strength in the diligent discharge of his various pastoral duties. Besides his constant preparation for the pulpit, he still continued to visit from house to house, and to superintend the different classes of the young, which, at his first coming to the town as a probationary assistant, he had formed. Soon after his induction, he connected himself in marriage with a young lady belonging to a respectable family in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh. In this endearing union he and his beloved partner found themselves happy in the mutual enjoyment of conjugal affection, and now a mourning widow and her fatherless children lament the loss of their faithful and affectionate guardian, and are called to trust in Him who is the husband of the widow, and in whom the fatherless find mercy.

About the beginning of February, 1823, when he had been two years engaged in the full discharge of his pastoral work, the affection of his family and congregation was put to severe trial from his being suddenly attacked by a painful disease, which soon became alarming, and excited among his friends apprehension that he would be rendered unfit for further public usefulness.

For several months he was absent from his public work, during which period great sympathy was felt for him, and expressed by his brethren, his congregation, and the community at large.

To prevent the growth of irreligion and infidelity in the parish and town in which he was situated, Mr. Geddes was in the custom of preaching an annual sermon on a Sabbath evening, particularly for the benefit of the young in his congregation, and appropriating the sum collected along with a subscription for the support of a library which he had established for the religious improvement of the several classes under his tuition. This library, according to his own account, "consisted chiefly of small works, on the evidences of Christianity, or on practical religion, or illustrative of the Scriptures, or of religious biography, or of information respecting the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom." One of these sermons, preached 1825, he published at request, the text being, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation."

After the execution in Paisley of two unhappy men, John Craig and James Brown, Mr. Geddes preached a sermon in 1829 to the young in his large congregation, on the awful consequences of irreligion and profligacy, which also he was induced to publish. This was soon followed by an interesting tract, entitled "Journal of Conversations with John Craig and James Brown, previous to their execution at Paisley, 29th October, 1829."

In the autumn of 1831, a vacancy having taken place in St. Andrew's Church, Glasgow, by the death of the Rev. Dr. Gibb, the Magistrates and Council, in accordance with the wish of the congregation, gave him a presentation to the vacant charge. It may be easily supposed, that this proposed change in the scene of his ministrations would be to him a matter of serious thought, and calculated to produce some anxiety of mind, on leaving a people by whom he was beloved and respected, and among whom his labours had been found useful. Although he spoke little on this subject, yet some of his friends knew a little of the difficulty he at that time experienced, amidst the different opinions of well-wishers, and the conflicting feelings within his breast, before he could come to a final determination as to what was his duty at so important a crisis. Having, however, fully weighed the matter, he was induced to accept of the offer made him of becoming minister of St. Andrew's parish; and the necessary steps being taken by those who were concerned in the business, he was inducted into his new charge, about the end of Jan. 1832.

Mr. Geddes entered on this new field of labour with the friendly countenance of his clerical brethren, and with the cordial good wishes of the people belonging to his congregation. As it was by assiduously labouring amongst the young of his flock that he hoped to be most successful in doing good, for the purpose of more effectually promoting the spiritual interests of the rising generation, he encouraged and promoted the establishment of Sabbath Evening Schools in his new parish; and we have authority for saying, that he had, be-

fore his death, so far matured his scheme, that ten of these useful seminaries for religious instruction were in actual operation. To the selection of pious and efficient teachers his discriminating judgment was particularly directed. For consultation regarding the best mode of conducting the instruction of the young people attending these schools, he frequently met with the teachers, and sometimes in his own house; and, indeed, to the whole details of the business, he devoted a great deal of his personal attention, as he had done to those with which he stood connected in his former charge.

Classes for the instruction of the young of both sexes, on week-day evenings, he also formed, and was at great pains in making proper arrangements for carrying his pious design into effect. As some connected with these classes were advanced to nearly years of maturity, he encouraged and assisted young men in forming among themselves friendly associations for the purpose of engaging in social exercises of religious conference and prayer. In early life he had himself experienced the benefit of such exercises, and therefore knew how much they are, when prudently conducted, calculated to promote the interests of personal religion, advantageous in preparation for the instruction of families, and affording an opportunity of forming youthful friendships that may be beneficial in future life. As a means of enabling young persons to engage in these devout social exercises in a profitable manner, he gave authority to some of his friends to publish anonymously a small tract, entitled "Substance of an Address to the Members of a Juvenile Fellowship Meeting." This address he delivered to a number of his young friends in Paisley, in 1827, and it contains some appropriate and salutary directions, most calculated to be useful to all who are members of such associations, and with tender and kindly feelings to a beloved pastor, these directions are still remembered by those to whom they were originally addressed.

Soon after this settlement in Glasgow, he most sedulously engaged in the fatiguing business of parochial visitation, and considering all circumstances, it is rather surprising that before his last illness he had visited all his parish. In thus devising and executing plans for the promotion of religious knowledge and christian piety, was Mr. Geddes assiduously engaged, when his constitution, once healthy and vigorous, began to fail.

For some weeks previous to the dispensation of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper in Glasgow, April, 1833, he felt his health greatly on the decline; and it was in presiding on this occasion of christian communion, that he made his last appearance in the pulpit. Though he went through the several duties of the day with composure and with something of his usual fervour of address, yet his friends could not help observing a visible change in his appearance; and they who had the best opportunities of knowing his real situation, became apprehensive that the period of his public usefulness was drawing to a close. We have been informed that he introduced the solemn service with an inter-

esting discourse on the transfiguration of Christ. During the time of his ministry in Paisley, he delivered a series of action sermons on the various incidents narrated by the evangelists regarding the sufferings and death of the Saviour of mankind. These striking circumstances in our Lord's history he illustrated and improved with great ability and solemnity, and in a manner well calculated to edify and impress the minds of intending communicants; and in the arrangements of Divine Providence, it was so ordered that he should conclude his pulpit labours by illustrating a wondrous display of the glory of the Redeemer when, with his highly-favoured disciples, and with Moses and Elias, witnesses of his majesty, he spake "of the decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem."

His disease was water in the chest, a disease which he bore with much patience and resignation to the will of God. On the evening of May 28, 1833, he called for the assistance of Mrs. Geddes, and when she was in the act of supporting him in her arms, he sunk down and immediately expired. Thus ended the useful life upon earth of this good man and faithful servant of Jesus Christ in the work of the Gospel, and the friends of Zion, who were acquainted with his worth, and many these were, mourned his loss with tears of genuine sorrow.

His manner of preaching was solemn and dignified, and peculiarly his own. Without any attempt at displaying the powers of the orator, his sermons were distinguished by devotional fervour, energy and perspicuity, and were always scriptural and instructive. In his lectures on the book of Genesis in St. Andrew's Church, and in his expository discourses on various passages of Sacred History, whether in the Old or New Testaments, in his former charge he was particularly happy. Both in his sermons and in his lectures he avoided nice metaphysical distinctions on intricate questions as being more calculated to bewilder and perplex the minds of plain and sincere Christians, than to edify and build them up in their most holy faith. As connected with Ecclesiastical Courts he was well acquainted with forms of procedure and constitutional law; and as an instance of his powers as a public speaker we may refer the reader to his speech in the General Assembly, 1827, against law agents being admitted into Kirk Sessions, which is fully reported in the *Christian Instructor* for October, 1827. For further information on the subject of this memoir, we refer our readers to the *Christian Instructor* for December, 1833, and January, 1834, to which we have been mainly indebted for these historical details, and to the excellent funeral discourses of Dr. Macfarlan of Greenock, and Dr. Brown of St. John's, Glasgow, which we reported very fully and inserted in the SCOTTISH PULPIT for June 15 and 22. In these the reader will find his character justly and beautifully delineated.

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SATURDAY, 12TH OCTOBER, 1833.

No. 81	SERMON by the Rev. JOHN JOHNSTON, Edinburgh. SERMON by the Rev. DAVID DICKSON, D.D., Edinburgh.	Price 2d.
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CONCLUSIONS CONNECTED WITH THE FAITH AND COMFORT OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD;

A SERMON PREACHED AT THE CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER,

By the Rev. JOHN JOHNSTON,*

Late Minister of the Chapel of Ease, Roxburgh Place, Edinburgh.

“One of the soldiers, with a spear, pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water.”—JOHN xix. 34.

THE depth and subtlety of human depravity are never so lamentably exhibited as when hypocrisy seeks to cover crime under the mask of respect and zeal for the ordinances of religion. Such is the inconsistency that so often marks and degrades our nature, that a high and sanctimonious regard for the external rites of piety has often been manifested by those who are strangers to the power of religion, and who live in reckless disregard of all the charities of social life. The mint, the anise, and the cumin have been regularly paid, while justice, mercy, and fidelity, have been as sacrilegiously forgotten; and hands reeking with the blood of martyred innocence have often been lifted up at the altar of mercy and love. In the worst of characters we often discern a vehement anxiety about the external rites of religion; the altar must not be abandoned, however impure the offering they present, and how far soever the heart may be estranged from God, the tongue must be employed to hide its deformity. To whatever cause this inconsistency is to be traced, whether it be that the lingering remains of conscience in minds where its power has not been wholly overthrown, keep up some respect for the institutions of religion, and prevent the influence of sin from dissolving the associations, or extirpating the habits of innocent and finer days; or whether zeal for the externals of devotion be just one of the contrivances to which hypocrisy has recourse in order to disguise the working of the dark and deadly passions of the heart—in whatever cause this feature of human depravity has its origin, the fact is mournfully attested by the records of human guilt; that the union

of outward respect for religious ordinances with a practical disregard of religious principle, the mixture of zeal for God with cruelty to man, constitute the most humiliating portion of the history of this apostate and fallen world.

Of this characteristic of humanity, we have not a more affecting proof than that which is presented to us in the portion of the history of our Lord's sufferings, which is this morning to engage your attention. In the conduct of the Jewish priests and rulers, we have the most palpable and revolting instance of inconsistency which the history of human hypocrisy can furnish. The plot which they had formed against the life of the innocent Son of God, had succeeded to their utmost wish. They had prevailed on the feeble-minded Pilate to deliver him up to be crucified. The cruel mandate had been obeyed. They had seen him nailed to the tree, and had watched the progress of the dreadful agony. They saw death had done his work. The rival of their influence among the people was now silenced, and they had resigned themselves to all the luxury of gratified revenge. But amid all this revelry of murderous joy, not one feeling of remorse, or pity, seems to have obtruded. No regret for the cruel sufferings they had inflicted, no remembrance of the benevolence of Him whom they had slain, disturbed the malignant tranquillity of their spirits. The savage joy of their hearts was not darkened by any stirrings of remorse, or subdued by any melting of human sympathy. But though dead to all that was humane and merciful; though steeled against all the relentings of pity, and all the remon-

* We understand it is in contemplation to publish the Sermons of the late lamented Mr. Johnston. We wish the work all success.

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strances of truth, their guilty satisfaction was interrupted by a hypocritical concern for the sanctity of the Sabbath-day. Though they sought to forget all that they could not fail to have known of the wisdom and benevolence of Him whom they had put so cruelly to death, they yet remembered that the next day was the Sabbath, and a high day ; and, though they dreaded not the guilt of crucifying the innocent, they were alarmed lest the sanctity of the Sabbath should be violated by allowing the bodies of Jesus and his companions in death to remain upon the cross ; and, therefore, they “besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.” What a frightful union is here ! Superstition with wickedness ! Zeal for the Sabbath with swiftness to shed blood ! Burning with zeal for the holiness of the passover, while recking with slaughtered innocence ! Verily, there is not, in the history of human crime, a darker page than that which records the inconsistency of these murderers of the Lord of glory.

With this demand the imbecile governor complied. The soldiers proceeded to do the last office of cruelty. The legs of the two companions of Jesus in crucifixion were instantly broken : but when they came to Jesus, they found that he was already dead. This precedence in death did not arise from any feebleness or delicacy of corporeal frame that made him yield more readily to the great destroyer. It intimated that his death was voluntary. It confirmed what he had said, “No man taketh my life from me, I have power to lay down my life.” It illustrates what the Apostle says of his sacrifice, that, “through the eternal Spirit, He offered up himself unto God.” And it is in accordance with the statement of another historian of his death, who tells us, that he “cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost.” His priority in death was so unusual in such circumstances, that when it was reported to Pilate, he “marvelled that he was already dead.” When, therefore, the soldiers “came to Jesus, and saw that he was already dead, they brake not his legs, but one of the soldiers, with a spear, pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water.

This fact is commended to our particular study and consideration, by the manner in which the Evangelist has recorded it. He does not state it as a mere passing occurrence, he brings it forth as an event of high and capital importance, gives it a prominent

and conspicuous place in his narrative, and dwells upon it with peculiar earnestness and anxiety. “He that saw it, bare record, and his record is true ; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.” To suppose that St. John gave this prominence to the fact because of the miraculous nature of it, is going farther than his statement seems to warrant. They who have paid any attention to the anatomy of the human body will see nothing miraculous in the event itself. A spear passing through the pericardium, or membranous bag, in which the heart is lodged, to the heart, would bring forth the watery fluid that surrounds the heart as well as the blood. In spite, therefore, of the laborious attempt of an ingenious expositor, whose love of paradox is almost equal to his learning, to show that this was altogether a preternatural appearance, we are disposed to consider that the water which issued with the blood was the fluid with which the heart in its natural situation is surrounded. The Evangelist, then, does not give this prominence and distinction to the flowing of blood and water from the pierced side of our blessed Master, because of the miraculous or pretermatural character of the fact. It must have been for some other and more important ends that the Evangelist gave such prominence to this fact in his narrative of his Master’s sufferings. He dwells upon it with an emphasis which he does not employ in the recording of other facts in his Master’s history. It is not stated by the other Evangelists, and as his gospel was written to supply the omissions of the historians who had preceded him, he gives peculiar importance to this particular fact ; but he does so, not because the fact was in itself preternatural, but because it leads to some important conclusions connected with the faith and comfort of the people of God in every age. To state and illustrate these conclusions will form an interesting and instructive introduction to the solemn services of this day. Let me, then, have your serious attention while we turn our thoughts to the truths which are illustrated and confirmed by the piercing of the Saviour’s side, and the issuing of blood and water from the wound. The fact is in itself interesting and affecting ; and the truths connected with it lead to a train of meditation coincident with the state of mind in which all of us are now assembled.

I. The first and most obvious aspect in which the piercing of our Lord’s side by the

Roman soldier is to be viewed, is that *it was an act of insult and indignity to his person.* To this, indeed, he was no stranger. In the hall of Pilate, in the court of Herod, and in the palace of the High Priest, he encountered indignities of the cruellest and most cutting kind. When he had been nailed to the accursed tree, it might have been expected that the malice of humanity had been spent, and that the holy sufferer would have been left to the care of sorrowing and pitying friends. But, beyond the moment of death, the malice of his enemies seems to have pursued him; and till sheltered in the tomb of Joseph, all manner of indignity and insult was offered to the holy and spotless flesh of the Son of God. "A body had been prepared for him," from which every element of evil and every principle of corruption was excluded, a temple of purity, into which nothing that defileth could find admission, and which was a fit habitation for the immaculate and benevolent tenant. But with what cruel torture was this body treated, and to what fearful and degrading insult and indignity was it exposed! Go to Gethsemane, and you see it bathed in blood, while the Spirit that dwelt in it was heavy and sore amazed. Enter the hall of Pilate, and you see the soldiers strip him of his garments and scourge him—"they plowed upon his back and made long their frowns." But, not satisfied with this indignity and cruelty, a crown of thorns is forced upon his head, and the blood flows in painful profusion from his lacerated temples. His hands and feet are perforated with bolts of iron, while life wore away in agony and shame. Here might the tragedy have closed; but no; to make sure of their victim his legs must be broken, and when that is found unnecessary, the work of death having been completed, one of the Roman soldiers, in all the ruffian wantonness of cruelty, dashed his spear into his heart, and the water and the blood flowed in profusion from his side. We cannot behold the body, which the Holy Spirit had prepared for the Saviour, thus tortured and mangled, without being penetrated with the deepest sorrow and humiliation. We could not see a criminal making satisfaction to the offended justice of his country amid such agony and woe—we could not see the body of a convicted malefactor thus insulted while dying and mangled when dead, without feelings of the deepest pity and commiseration. And shall we this morning look at the pierced

side of the holy Jesus unmoved or unsubdued? Shall we see his visage and form more mangled than the sons of men, and remain strangers to the sentiments which they are fitted to awaken? For whom was it that he was thus mangled? It was for us. "He was wounded for our transgressions." Instead, then, of dwelling on the malignant enmity of the Jewish people towards the innocent Messiah, or execrating the ruffian cruelty of the soldier who pierced him, we shall find the crucifiers of the Redeemer nearer home, and be led to a more serious exercise than venting our impotent indignation against men who have long ago passed to their account, and have reaped the fruit of their doings. Let us look to Him whom we pierced, and mourn because of him. Had we been innocent and obedient children, this tragedy of blood would never have been acted, the crown of thorns would never have been platted, and the soldier's spear would have been otherwise employed. Looking to the lifeless yet bleeding Saviour, let us mourn over the guilt which rendered necessary such a costly sacrifice; and as the best testimony of our grief and gratitude—of our grief for the sins that crucified him, and of our gratitude for his submission to such insult and indignity in our cause—let us vow uncompromising war against the moral crucifiers of the Lord of glory, and resolve, that so far as our influence extends, or our efforts and our prayers reach, he shall never again be "wounded in the house of his friends." And let the believing contemplation of the wounds of Jesus teach us submission under the varied ills and sorrows of our own earthly lot. When we feel disquieted, or alarmed, at the prospect of sufferings and sorrows, let us remember the insulted and mangled body of the Saviour, and we shall deem nothing too valuable to resign, or too painful to endure, for him. We are the followers of a scorned, insulted, and tortured Master; and we cannot expect to pass through life in perfect and untroubled tranquillity. The Master was insulted and degraded by a scorning world, and his servants must not expect to be uniformly honoured and revered. In the darkest hour of sorrow, the remembrance of the cross, the nails and the spear will rebuke our murmuring, and lead us "in patience to possess our souls."

II. In the second place, the piercing of our Lord's side with the soldier's spear, *ascertains, and places beyond question, the*

reality of his death. On the reality and certainty of our Master's death some of the most important truths depend. If he had not actually expired upon the cross, the sacrifice for sin would have been imperfect; or rather there would have been no sacrifice at all. The true nature of a sacrifice is the offering up of life, the actual dying of the victim; and if the victim did not die, no sacrifice was offered. If, therefore, the death of Jesus were not put beyond all question, we could have no certain assurance that a real and proper sacrifice had been made for sin. His doctrine might enlighten, and his example direct us, but we should have no assurance that an actual and efficient atonement had been made for sin, unless his death were put beyond the possibility of doubt. In like manner, the establishing of the reality of our Lord's death is essential to the confirmation of the hopes which are founded on his resurrection. It is his coming forth from the state of the dead, and not his escape from the sepulchre of Joseph, that constitutes his resurrection. When we appeal to the resurrection of Christ as proof of his divine mission and the ground of our hope of immortality, the opposers of our statement have a right to put the previous question, and to call upon us to show that he really died; and unless we can show that the body, which Joseph removed from Calvary and placed in the new sepulchre in his garden, was really lifeless, every conclusion which we draw from the absence of Jesus from the tomb, and his subsequent appearance to his disciples is illegitimate and unsatisfactory. If we could not show beyond the possibility of doubt that death had actually taken place—that life had left the body which Joseph "wrapped in clean linen, and laid in his own new tomb," it would be useless to speak of his resurrection, or to found any conclusions upon it. "Our preaching would be vain, your faith would be vain, and you would be yet in your sins." The enemy might say, and the statement would not be without plausibility, that he was merely in a swoon or temporary stupor, from which he recovered in the sepulchre, and left it. But all such insinuations are precluded by the fact mentioned in the text. The piercing of his side put his death beyond question. The individuals who were crucified with him might survive the breaking of their legs. But the spear passing through the pericardium into the heart transfixed his vitals and completed the work

of death. In the soundest and most vigorous health the body could not outlive the wound. The reality of our Master's death, then, cannot be questioned, and every truth which we found upon it is established and confirmed. The death of Jesus, being thus ascertained and established, every truth connected with it is certified to the faithful. A full and efficient atonement has been made for human guilt, for we are fully assured, that his life was given for our ransom. He has redeemed us from the curse of the law; and "being made a sin-offering for us, we," who have no righteousness of our own, "are made the righteousness of God in him." His resurrection, too, is thus put beyond the reach of one of the most powerful objections that could have been urged against it. The body which Joseph of Arimathea removed from the cross is proved to have been lifeless; and, therefore, when Jesus left the sepulchre and appeared to his friends, he was "the first-fruits of them that sleep." Believing that he "both died, and rose, and revived," we look up to him with sacred satisfaction and joy, and adore him as "Lord both of the dead and of the living." Little did the soldier know, when, with wanton brutality, he thrust his spear into the Redeemer's side, what consolation that thoughtless act was to certify to the Church of God throughout all generations. Though he meant not so, neither was it in his heart so to do, yet was he the instrument in the hand of eternal Providence of exhibiting the reality of the sacrifice made for sin, and ascertaining the truth of the resurrection of our Master from the dead. "Surely, O God, the wrath of man doth praise thee;" for the brutal act of this nameless ruffian, by certifying the death of Jesus, hath established our hope of pardon and immortal life. These hopes let us ever cherish with adoring gratitude; and, while we wonder at the mysterious conduct of infinite wisdom that rendered the soldier's spear the instrument of certainty to our faith and hope, let us this day at the table of the Lord, devote ourselves, soul, body, and spirit, to the service and glory of Him who, we know so assuredly, "died for our offences, and rose again for our justification."

III. In the third place, additional interest is thrown around this fact, when we view it as the *fulfilment of ancient prophecy.* T his view of the fact, we are led by the Evangelist himself. He assures us, that he gave such peculiar prominence to it in his narra-

tive, because two remarkable prophecies were accomplished in it. His words are very remarkable. Having stated the fact that our Lord's side was pierced with a spear, by one of the Roman guard, he adds, "He that saw it bear record, and his record is true ; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe ; for these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, *a bone of him shall not be broken* ; and again, another Scripture saith, *They shall look on him whom they pierced.*" Each of these prophecies claims our particular consideration, as furnishing clear and distinct evidence of the Messiahship of Christ ; and, consequently, of his divine mission and authority, as the Saviour and Lord of all. With respect to the first of these prophecies, it is obvious, that it is the prescription in reference to the Paschal Lamb that is pointed to. Among the various injunctions given respecting the Paschal Lamb, it is especially commanded, "*neither shall ye break a bone thereof.*" Now, as the Paschal Lamb was an acknowledged type of the Messiah, and as the appointments concerning the type must be verified in the antitype, had the order for the breaking of the legs of those who hung upon the cross, been carried into execution on the person of Jesus, the proof of his Messiahship would have been deficient and void. And yet how nearly was the fatal order executed. The order had been issued with respect to him, as well as those who were crucified with him. There was no exception specified in behalf of the body of our Lord. The officers proceed to the full execution of the mandate. The executioner breaks the legs first of the one malefactor, and then of the other ; but why does he stop short ? why does he venture to disobey the order, and presume to act upon his own discretion, which in a Roman soldier was no slight offence ? Nobody interferes to stay his uplifted hand, or to arrest the fatal blow. But had it fallen, the pretensions of Jesus to be the antitype of the Paschal Lamb, and consequently the Messiah of Israel, would have been for ever annulled. While, therefore, the executioner proceeds to do his work, an invisible Power interposed to restrain him. The honour of God's Son was at stake—the comfort of the Church was in peril—the Scripture must be fulfilled—the mission of Jesus must be established by the fulfilment of prophecy—and, therefore, is the arm of Jehovah made bare, to preserve the integrity of his Son's body, that, like his

great and ancient type, "*a bone of him should not be broken.*" Nor is the piercing of his side a less remarkable accomplishment of prophecy than the preservation of his bones. The one soldier did that which he had no commission to do—the other refrained from doing that which he was ordered to do. In the latter case, the Messiahship of Jesus is proved by the resemblance to *the Paschal Lamb*, and in the former by the fulfilment of the prophecy of Zechariah, that the Messiah should be "*pierced.*" How strangely was the accomplishment of these predictions brought about. In the accomplishing of the one, the soldier abstains from doing to Jesus what he had done to the others ; while, in accomplishing the other prophecy, another soldier does to him what he did not do to the others. The one did to him what he was not commissioned or instructed to do, while the other refrained from doing what he was specially enjoined to execute. And by this opposite conduct of two Roman soldiers, were two memorable predictions of God's word accomplished. The Scripture had said that Messiah should be "*pierced*," and that "*not a bone of him should be broken* ;" and heaven and earth might pass away, but one "*jot or tittle*," of what Jehovah has spoken, "*could not fail.*" "*The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations.*" "*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.*"

IV. There is another and deeply interesting and consolatory aspect in which this fact must be viewed. While it is an affecting instance of insult and indignity offered to the person of Jesus—while it ascertains, beyond a doubt, the reality of his death—and while it establishes the truth of his mission by the accomplishment of prophecy, it is still farther to be regarded as presenting a striking declaratory *emblem of the expiatory and purifying virtue of his sacrifice.* The piercing of his Master's side, and the issuing of blood and water from the wound, made a deep, and solemn, and abiding, impression on the mind of "*the disciple whom Jesus loved.*" He gives it, as we have seen, a prominent place in his narrative, and authenticates it by a strong and reiterated affirmation ; and we find him recurring to it with peculiar solemnity and satisfaction in one of his epistles. In the fifth chapter of his first Epistle, at the sixth verse, he says,

“This is He who came by water and blood, not by water only, but by water and blood.” In all languages, water has been employed as an emblem of moral cleansing, while the universal prevalence of sacrifice has made blood the proper symbol of expiation ; and as Christ died for us, the issuing of blood and water from his pierced side, in two separate and distinguishable streams, indicates, in a manner the most explicit and affecting, the twofold purpose of his death. It was not merely to make atonement for human guilt, but to “purify to himself a peculiar people,” that Jesus hung upon the cross, and bowed his anointed head. He gave himself not merely as an offering and a sacrifice, but that, by this offering, he might sanctify and cleanse the church, and present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. This twofold purpose of the Saviour’s death was most strikingly proclaimed by the blood and water that flowed from his side. The blood was the emblem of the sacrifice which was offered for pardon, while the water indicated the purifying and practical efficacy of the oblation. He came into the world not only to instruct and reform mankind by his doctrine and example, but to offer an expiatory sacrifice for their sins ; and when the whole was closed, these united purposes of his incarnation were symbolically exhibited and proclaimed by the blood and water which descended from his wounded side. This sacred effusion proclaimed that he died, at once to satisfy the justice of his Father, and to sanctify the souls of his people—the blood flowed in token of the pardon that was purchased—the water testified the purity that was to be produced. Yes, this sacred flood of blood and water proclaimed to the moral world that the atonement was complete, and the cleansing fount set open. O what a wonderful exhibition have we here of the goodness and severity of God ! It is the ninth hour, and Jesus, strong to the last in suffering, commanding his spirit to his Father, exclaims with a loud voice, It is finished, bows his anointed head, and renders up the ghost. Nature is convulsed. Earth trembles. The sanctuary, that type of the heaven of heavens, is forcibly thrown open. The tombs are burst, and the dead are flocking to the holy city. Jesus hangs upon the cross a corpse, and, lo ! the fountain, which an ancient prophet foretold should be opened for sin and for uncleanness, is seen suddenly springing from his wounded side. Surely this

is the ramsomer of the captives—the purifier of the polluted. Never, my brethren, let us lose sight of this double purpose of our Saviour’s incarnation and sacrifice—never let us separate the cleansing virtue of his death from its redeeming power—never let us forget that, while the sacrifice he offered secures our pardon, it is designed to promote our purity. Ever remember that we need alike the water and the blood—the blood to pardon, the water to purify. The water and the blood were not severed in their effusion—though they were distinct, they flowed together ; let them not be separated in their application to our souls ; while we look for comfort from the atoning sacrifice of Christ, let us implore the experience of its sanctifying power. Seated as we are soon to be at the table of the Lord, let these views of the purposes of our Redeemer’s death be combined in our meditation. While we remember the blood which flowed in token of our pardon, let us think of the water which accompanied it, as an emblem of the purity of the redeemed. Looking to the cross, and beholding the mysterious stream of blood and water, let us rejoice in Him who died alike to sanctify and save us. As we approach the table of the Son of God, let it be our prayer, that we may know him in the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death. And may each of us retire from the table, saying, “In the Lord have I righteousness and strength”—righteousness for my acceptance with the God whom I have offended, and strength for the discharge of duty, and the endurance of suffering.

These, my brethren, are the conclusions to which this affecting circumstance, in the history of our Lord’s suffering, seems to conduct us ; and it seems to have been for the sake of these conclusions, that the Evangelist has given it such prominence in his narrative, and recurs to it with the same interest and satisfaction in his epistle. This wound, with which Jesus was wounded in the house of his friends, was regarded by our Lord himself with sentiments of obvious satisfaction. When he arose from the dead, he retained the mark of this wound in his side, and appealed to it as evidence of the identity of his person. “Reach hither thy hand,” said he to Thomas, who seemed to have some doubts about the truth of his resurrection, “reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing.” With the mark of the soldier’s spear in his side, as well as the print

of the nails in his hands and feet, did he ascend to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God ; and these scars does he retain amid the splendours of his glorified humanity, and to them does he appeal as the ground of his intercession for his people. As the hero, who has been wounded in the service of his country, is honoured for the scars which remind his friends of the dangers he encountered and braved in the angry field, so our gracious Master, who “ was wounded for our transgressions,” bears in his flesh the memorials of Calvary, amid the glories of his Father’s throne. St. John saw him “ as a Lamb that had been slain,” and through eternity the sight of these memorials of his wounds will awaken the unwearied wonder and unceasing gratitude and praise of his redeemed people. To this exercise, which now occupies the ransomed around the throne, and in which we ourselves hope for ever to be engaged, let us this morning resign ourselves, and seek to anticipate those feelings of gratitude and transport with which we expect through eternity to behold and adore our wounded, but triumphant, Lord. While we take the bread which records the memory of the sacred body that was pierced by the spear, and drink the wine which recalls the blood that flowed from the wound, let us surrender ourselves to all those holy and grateful feelings which this mysterious sight awakens. With godly sorrow, let us look to Him whom we pierced, and mourn because of him, for it is the sight of the pierced and bleeding Saviour that is the most efficient awakener of that repentance, which needeth not to be repented of. We realize and feel our guilt most deeply when we stand at the foot of the cross and think of the agony of Him who died. The eye-witnesses of that awful scene smote their breasts as they retired from it ; and when we view it by faith, and remember that our guilt was the procuring cause of all that the holy sufferer endured, and “ brought the vengeance on his guiltless head,” our hearts will be subdued and saddened, sin will appear exceeding sinful, and the vow will burst from the soul, “ Let us break the bands of iniquity asunder, and cast away its cords from us.” But while we look to Him whom we pierced, and mourn, we do not sorrow as those who have no hope. The same sight that proclaims our guilt, announces our pardon and peace. While the view of the pierced Saviour produces the deepest conviction of sin, it ministers strong

consolation ; for those sufferings which satisfied the justice of God, may well calm the conscience of the sinner. Through the blood that was poured out upon the cross we have redemption, and it cleanseth from all sin. When weighed down under the sense of the number and aggravation of our offences, we feel consolation and peace in the infinite value of the sacrifice ; on this sacrifice we rely, and are accepted in the Beloved ; and “ we joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.” The sight of the pierced and bleeding Saviour lifts us above all the ills of humanity. These, indeed, are neither few nor small, and sore is the travail that is appointed to man under the sun. But looking to Him that bled in our behalf, we are raised above the trials that disquiet them who know him not. When we see what he suffered, we learn to be silent under the pressure of our own sorrows. When we see him scorned and insulted, we cease to desire vengeance on the disturbers of our peace. But, above all, the view of the love and mercy manifested on Calvary, leads us to regard our sorrows with patient and resigned minds. The distresses of humanity cannot be viewed as unjust or insufferable, when we regard them as the appointment of Him who spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all. Christ, by his death, has redeemed us from the curse of the law ; and, therefore, there can be nothing penal in any of our sufferings. They are the correction of a Father, not the visitation of a Judge. From the view of a bleeding Saviour, we can look with tranquillity to this scene of trial, and regard all the sufferings of humanity, as medicines administered by a kind physician. The cross is the tree which sweetens all the bitter waters of the wilderness. At the table of the Lord, while we weep over the grief and anguish of Him who was pierced with the spear, we see the sting taken from our own sorrows, and light arising on the darkest spots in the vale of tears. With hearts comforted with the promises of mercy, ascertained to us by the piercing of the Redeemer’s side, with spirits liberated from the dominion of sin, and lifted above the calamities of time, glowing with love to the Saviour, and readiness to do his will, we are this day, I trust, to have some foretaste of the joy and peace with which we shall behold him on his throne, and see the marks and memorials of the wounds he received in our cause, and dwell on the exhaustless

blessings that have flowed from his "pierced side." Let the love of Jesus henceforth be the ruling affection of our souls; and let the feelings, which we this day experience, spread through the whole of life, till we arrive at that land, where nought but Im-

manuel's glory shall be seen, and nothing but his praise be heard.

Hail Son of God, Saviour of men ! Thy name
Shall be the copious matter of my song
Henceforth ; and never shall my harp thy praise
Forget ; nor from thy Father's praise disjoin.

THE SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST ;

A FUNERAL SERMON PREACHED ON THE FORENOON OF SUNDAY, 15TH SEPTEMBER, 1833,
ON THE DEATH OF THE REV. JOHN JOHNSTON, LATE MINISTER OF ROXBURGH
PLACE CHAPEL,

By the Rev. DAVID DICKSON, D.D.,

One of the Ministers of St. Cuthbert's Church, Edinburgh.

"Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."—HEB. ix. 27.

THE second and glorious appearance of Christ at the last day, completes the salvation of all his people, and is intimately and inseparably connected with that death on the cross, by which he redeemed them unto God. These two events, accordingly, are almost equally associated with each other

the inspired Apostle, as the sources experimental and practical godliness. "Looking," says Paul to Titus, "for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." It is the special and appointed design of the interesting and solemn ordinance of the Supper, *to show forth the Lord's death till he come*; and in the words immediately before our text, we are assured, that "as it is appointed unto all men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." As the announcement of his death is, in every instance, the certain prelude of his resurrection, so the expiatory sacrifice of our Lord, when he spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them in his death, was the prelude of his ascending the throne of judgment, and securing to all his redeemed the enjoyment of glory with himself in heaven. From his death on the cross, and subsequent resurrection, we are made heirs of the temple into which he has entered with that blood which was shed for us; and, like the worshipping congregation of Israel, who, after the High Priest on the

great day of atonement had appeared before God in the inner sanctuary, anxiously waited for his return to bless them, no longer having on his ordinary apparel, but one far surpassing in splendour, even the high pontifical robes—we are taught to expect the great High Priest of our profession, even Jesus, in all his personal and mediatorial glory, to bless us with a perfect and everlasting redemption. How gladly then may all Christ's genuine people anticipate this most interesting, and to them most joyful, event ! Great, however, is the danger, lest we should appropriate consolations which do not belong to us, and buoy ourselves up with hopes of future blessedness, from the second coming of Christ, which are at present but as the baseless fabric of a vision, disappearing for ever, leaving not a trace behind. In the following discourse, I shall briefly direct your attention, in the first place, to the character and exercise of those to whom Christ will appear the second time without sin unto salvation, as described by the Apostle, when he speaks of their *looking* for his appearing; and, in the second place, to the circumstances and object of his second appearance, as expressed by the words before us, *without sin unto salvation*.

What, then, does this act of *looking*, or, we should rather say, this exercise and habit of mind, imply ? Shall we conceive of it as imparting to us the idea of merely thinking of his second coming, or of merely forming the wish, that when he does appear, he may appear to us with joy, and not with grief; or, if at any time this most interesting event press itself on our thoughts, shall we form the idea, that the act of look-

ing for it implies that we may feel little anxiety about it, and make little attempt to prepare for it? Alas! alas! many there are of whom it may be said, that in one or other of these ways they look for his coming without hope. Surely this is not real Christianity. It is only the strong desire of happiness in a future world, or the conscious and alarming fear of punishment in that world, that prompts men to this careless transient or unprofitable contemplation, if contemplation it can be called, of an event which, when realized in the light in which Paul presents it, cannot but create solicitude of soul to seek and prepare for its arrival. When conscience sets the terrors of death in array before them, they tremble at the thought of judgment to come; for when death commits its ravages around them, merely visiting their circle, or entering their dwellings, they then give way for a season to solemnity of mind and hope, though without any safe ground that it may be well with them at last. Have they witnessed a friend or relation who has no hope in his death? Still they continue as unprepared for their own end as before. Have they witnessed a friend or relation die in the Lord? Without any effective purpose of heart, they simply breathe the hope, and perhaps express the words, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." All is soon forgotten, and the world resumes its predominance over their hearts and conduct. In all these cases, they are scarcely thinking of Christ at all, or of the manifestation of his glory. My dear brethren, if these be the only characteristics of your contemplation of Christ's second appearing, need I say that you are neither looking for him nor for it, and that you have no well-grounded hope of salvation. For,

I observe, in the first place, that in looking for the second appearance of Christ, true believers direct to it the firm and realizing eye of faith in its certainty. It is, in reality, on Christ having come already to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, that true believers rest all their hope; and their belief of his second coming is not less strong. Their conviction of this is connected with their conviction of his death and resurrection, and of his immutable veracity given by the inspiration of God; and it cannot be doubted by any of us, without rejecting the truth of this revelation, in which is all that is most precious of

consolation and hope. The connexion of this with the other events keeps alive and strengthens our faith in its reality. It is so associated with the resurrection of our Lord, that when our minds dwell on this, we cannot but look forward to that, nor can we, with realizing faith, commemorate his death without receiving, as well as recognising, the most undoubted pledge of his return; for it is written, "As oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death *till he come*." We should, in short, no more disbelieve this truth, than that we ourselves are sinners, and must one day die, or that Christ rose to save us both from sin and death.

In the second place, believers as looking for the second appearance of Christ, earnestly desire and anticipate this certain event; while to the unbelieving there is every thing in the very prospect of his coming, calculated to fill with alarm: and while with this they feel the thought and anticipation of it a most unwelcome intruder on their vanities and worldly indulgences, and, therefore, banish it from their reflections, or think of it as unconcernedly as they can, it is to those who look for it, the object not only of firm and realizing faith, but of longing desire and assured expectation. It is far more than a wish for its arrival that they feel—a most intense solicitude for it fills their minds. As at present exposed to many difficulties and dangers, and as from sin, not only within but around them, their greatest apprehensions arise; they cannot but hope for a time when every struggle will be for ever ended—when they shall experience a peacable and triumphant removal from this world of sin and sorrow. They are thus desiring like Paul, to depart and to be with Christ. Every trial they meet with for righteousness' sake—every appearance of sin on the part of their brethren of mankind, serves but to excite their anxiety to be themselves found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.

But I remark, in the third place, that to look for the second coming of Christ, is diligently to be preparing for this solemn event. Without this, indeed, the pretences to a firm and realizing faith in its certainty are most insincere, and all desire and hope connected with it are but dreams. To be persuaded of its reality, and to long for its arrival, are utterly incompatible with a state of indifference to the necessity of being prepared for it. Yes, if we desired it, we

unmixed with a longing *solicitude*, though free from doubt, for something still more accordant with the exercises and enjoyments which are to be anticipated when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, and death shall be swallowed up of victory, when we shall see Christ in all the splendour of his glory, in all the fulness of his love, when we shall see him as he is, and no longer as through a glass darkly, but face to face, when our bodies, for ever separated from every element of *pollution*, shall fit us for all that experience of delight and joy, and for all those exercises of adoration with which seraphic blessed spirits celebrate the praises of Him that sitteth on the throne for ever and ever. But whatever there be in this suggestion, however high the perfection in the state, and during the period that may intervene between the death and resurrection of believers, it will be greatly increased by the effect of this glorious event. It is for consummating this that Christ is to appear the second time, and thus when their bodies are ransomed from the grave, and with their spirits united to Him as their own everlasting though mystical Head, they shall have no more to hope for, and no more to receive, but ever increasing enjoyment of the same perfection, and purity, and bliss. Every exercise engaged in, every service performed, will only serve to heighten this resemblance in holiness and felicity to Him who is the perfect likeness of the infinitely perfect and blessed God. Their employment will be their Creator's praise, singing in unceasing hallelujahs the wonders of God, and raising that anthem, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." Then will the hands which have so often

hung inactive, and the knees which have been so often feeble, and the feet which have been so often unengaged, when in this world, be lifted up for ever, and established for every duty and service—and there the heart in which so many vain thoughts were allowed to enter, where so many sinful desires found their lurking-place, and which gave such a disproportioned share of affection to things seen and temporal, will be so spiritualized and sanctified as not to be annoyed by a single temptation, but sustained in a perpetual love and veneration of all the glories of the divine nature, and all the characters of redeeming grace, and so filled as with all the fulness of God. And will not such glory perfect the salvation of all the redeemed? Theirs is a common salvation, in the enjoyment of which there is no selfishness, as each will see in every other around him the glory which he himself is most particularly excited to magnify. Theirs is a companionship of perfection, and happiness, and immortality. No feebleness or wrinkle of age will any longer meet their eye, no cries of distress will any longer rest upon their ears, but immortal youth will for ever bloom, and uninterrupted happiness will for ever be enjoyed around them. Theirs is a public salvation in which all will echo their Creator's praise. It is a salvation in which all the ways of Jehovah shall be vindicated and glorified, and which will ever disclose, while ages roll on, new marvels to all who shall hear their Saviour say, on that great and eventful day, "Come ye blessed of my Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And theirs is an everlasting salvation which time instead of encroaching upon will only be perpetually increasing, and in which they will be raised to new honours, the most angelic and glorious.

(To be concluded in our next.)

GLASGOW:—W. R. M'PHUN, PUBLISHER, 86, TRONGATE,

To whom all Communications should be addressed.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 19TH OCTOBER, 1833.

No. 82. SERMON by the Rev. THOMAS BROWN, D.D., Glasgow. Price 2d.
 STRICTURES by the Rev. JOHN GILCHRIST, D.D., Edinburgh.

THE SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST;

A Funeral Sermon preached by the Rev. DAVID DICKSON, D.D.—Concluded.

ARE these the objects on which the desires and the faith of believers are fixed? How, then, should they be animated to every duty, and sustained under every trial, by prospects so glorious and sublime! Are thus our faith, and desires, and expectations, founded on the infallible testimony of the word of God? Then why not be pressing forward to their full attainment—why not be living more habitually above the vanities of the earth on which we tread, and enjoying the substances and spiritualities of that heaven to which our hearts have been raised? Why should we grovel so amid the delusions of sin, when the fruits of the tree of life, and the realities of the paradise of God, are so surely within our reach? Why should we not struggle with and resist temptation, when, by resisting a little longer, we are certain of having them subdued? why not be doing with all our might whatever our hands find yet to do in advancing the glory of Christ, when we shall so soon be called into his dwelling-place of rest, to live with him for ever, amid the joys of his Father's house? Why should we sorrow as those who have no hope, concerning friends whom we love, but who have fallen asleep in the Lord, whether they have been carried off as by an unexpected stroke, while we had promise of many days of fellowship with them here, or whether they have filled up the measure of their years, and were so enfeebled, that nothing but the strength of natural affection could have wished them much longer to be the tenants of mortality? It is true we shall hear no more the tones of their voice, no more perceive the smiles of love upon their countenance on this side the tomb; but their spirits are already beyond the reach of all imperfection, and distress,

and sin. And is not the time approaching when our spirits, the spirits of all who have faith at least, shall be reunited to theirs, and when we shall be associated with them face to face, and voice to voice, and hand to hand, in the bonds of natural endearment, and indestructible love, in the presence of the Lamb for ever? What though we should experience many troubles before we enter the swellings of Jordan. Let us be ever diligent and active in the service of Him who has called us to glory. Let us wait with patience and hope, while we fight the good fight of faith, for laying hold of the perfected salvation he has secured for us. Let us have our affections ever rising above, where he sitteth on the right hand of God; for yet a little while, and he will take us up to his own presence, there to be for ever with him, when we shall see him as he is. But is it possible that any now hearing me, can regard the attainment of this salvation as unworthy of their anxiety? You may pass through life in seeming ease. Sin may so poison your relish for enjoyment, as to make you prefer its sordid pleasures to the present joys of immortality; and this world may seem to render you as happy as you desire, but it will not do so always. "Live as you may, still you must follow them. It is appointed unto you as unto them, and unto all men once to die, and after that the judgment. Never was there a circumstance more fitted to impress on our minds the solemn consideration of the truths we have now illustrated, than that which has brought us together at this time, clothed with the outward habiliments of mourning, as indicating our inward and sorrowing feelings and emotions. The husband, the father,

the friend, the pastor, has been taken away from the partner, and the children, and the connexions, and the flock ; and it has been so unanticipated, that it is an event in which the immediate hand of God is most distinctly visible. And which of us should not feel as if the very next commission death will receive, may lay us equally in the dust of the tomb ? To me it is peculiarly affecting. But a little more than two months have elapsed since I welcomed him in this place, into his new connexion with the national church—a connexion which seemed to have opened up the prospect of increasing personal comfort, and ministerial usefulness. But now I have to speak of that bond, as with regard to him, already broken, nay, dissolved, and dissolved for ever. Need you wonder, then, that even I should be ready to mingle my tears with those of his weeping family and friends ? He was a native of this city, where, or in its environs, he received the whole of his education. There are not a few still alive who recollect the early promises he gave of ardour and perseverance in prosecuting his studies, united to original talent of no inferior cast, and the kindness of his heart, and the loveliness of his dispositions, wherewith he was so peculiarly characterized. Some of them are still looking back with fond, but regretful, remembrance of the hours spent in his society in early life. Having gone through the usual literary and theological course prescribed by the Established Church in the Edinburgh University, during which he stood high in the estimation of the Professors, and of his own companions, he was licensed in 1807 by the Presbytery of Relief, and within a year, was chosen to a new connexion, arising out of a difference of opinion among certain of the Relief congregation in College Street, in consequence of the appointment of Mr. Smith, instead of him, to succeed Mr. Struthers. His congregation at first assembled in Carubber's Close, while this church was a-building, and this place had been the scene of twenty-four years of his eminent labours, when it pleased the great Head of the Church to remove him. That during that period he experienced many trials, domestic and official, is well known to you. No fewer than four children he had, under very distressing circumstances, to conduct to the narrow house ; and what he and his dear partner had then to feel, none but those that are fathers and mothers themselves can know. But he was enabled to bear these

painful bereavements with fortitude and resignation, which some, I am persuaded, still recollect, and which, I doubt not, had a beneficial influence upon you. Of the more official circumstances which led to his retiring from the Presbytery of Relief, it scarcely becomes me to speak, though I cannot but personally testify to the following statement, which I give very nearly in the words published by an old and intimate friend of his, and which correspond with my own conviction of its truth ; that his separation from that communion did not arise from any contumacious obstinacy on his part about the use of an organ in the chapel, but from a controversy about it, which was before them ; that its introduction was an act in which he merely acquiesced as of no vital importance, and when he renounced the Relief Body, he would not tolerate an order, which he conceived unjustifiable, but he adopted no arbitrary steps himself ; separating from them, because a longer connexion with them was quite incompatible with the circumstances in which he and the congregation attached to him were placed. This is stated from a private knowledge of the case, and thus this course of conduct evinced a manliness and decision of character that commanded the respect of all who were aware of it, and especially the affectionate fidelity of this congregation, which has continued to the very end of his life. The result of this separation from the body of Relief was, that it left him and his congregation as it were in an annihilated state, which, though unavoidable, was irksome and inconvenient, and there being no substantial barrier between them and the National Church, application was made to the proper quarter, and for the first time since the Secession from the National Church, about one hundred years ago, the country saw, and saw with delight, the last General Assembly cordially receive into its communion him and his entire congregation as brethren of the same faith, and the same church. The connexion has subsisted but a short time, but, short as it has been, it has given me and others an opportunity of forming an acquaintance with, and, I must say, of being led to cherish an affection for, Mr. Johnston, the termination of which I deeply regret. But we must submit to Him who does all things wisely, who calls away his servants from their earthly sphere of duty in his own time, and gives not an account to them who are left behind, of the reason of his procedure.

And what shall I say of your departed pastor's pulpit ministrations? With these you are familiar, and I trust you have not received them in vain. By whatever depth of theological research, or intellectual power, they might be characterized, there is but one opinion on this point, that they were fitted to instruct, edify, and console. His style was clear and expressive, and, by this, he led you to the Scriptures, as the only storehouse of religious truth, and, by this, he endeavoured to guide you into the way of christian duty, and to lead your devotions with peculiar fervour and solemnity; and from the impressiveness of his manner, and the animated tones of his voice, which had more than usual harmony, as well as compass, an effect was produced, calculated deeply to interest, and strongly to affect all who heard him. His pulpit discourses were composed with no ordinary care, and his labour, indeed, in preparing his lectures and sermons was incessant, as the number and variety of his works, written out with evident carefulness, abundantly evince, and as you yourselves must know from the variety in the discourses, from which he explained to you the truths of our holy religion during the course of his ministry. And in private, I call you to witness how constantly he was found doing what in him lay to promote your best interests, instructing you, and praying with you and your families. While he neglected not to examine both the old and the young, I cannot refrain from mentioning, in particular, his anxious labour for the good of the young of his congregation, over whom he watched as a father over his children, meeting at one period twice every week, and latterly between the intervals of Sabbath worship, not only delivering a series of discourses to young men especially, on the great means by which the salvation of sinners is obtained, but also on the evidences and truths of Christianity, in order to confirm them against the votaries of infidelity. What was then your pastor? A man of talent, of learning, of sound and discriminating judgment, of a strong and powerful mind, one who was conscientious and diligent, and had his heart in his work. And how unexpectedly has this visitation come! When away from home, when he was ministering in a distant place, though enabled through divine aid to finish the service for the day, he was, almost as soon as it was finished, enfeebled with a disease, which soon ended in mortal dissolution. He spoke

but little after the attack, though he continued to breathe. What a solemn lesson on the absolute uncertainty of human life, and what a solemn warning, while the day of life lasts, to be prepared for death!

Every man must feel for his widow and children—who, indeed, would not feel for them? Their bereavement cannot but be severe; a husband and a father who, after having been twenty years with them, was in the course of forty hours not only disengaged from the services he was performing, but called to enter into the other world. To them his words, and looks, and acts, and prayers, can never be renewed. Let them not want either our sympathy, or our prayers. Their loss we cannot by any means repair; God alone can enable them to bear it without sinking; and he is at once God, and the Judge of the widow, and the Father of the fatherless. O may this be their experience! May they be the objects of God's protecting and providing care.

We feel also for you who have lost a pastor, to whom you were justly and strongly attached. He merited all your affection. We bid you remember what you heard from him, according to the words of truth—we bid you recollect how he prayed for you—we bid you remember his faith, his charity, his patience, his godliness—we bid you never lose sight of Him who hath called him away from you, the Chief Shepherd of the sheep, who, though he has removed your pastor, can, and will, if solicited by prayer, send you another, according to his own heart, to feed you with sound doctrine and the bread of life. And we bid you pray for yourselves and one another, that God may sanctify to every one of you so heavy an affliction—that he may cause it to redound, as unquestionably he will, to his own glory, and also to your good, both for the time that now is, and for that eternity which is to follow. Finally, oh! let us remember that the time is short, while every thing around us and within us, not only whispers but proclaims, as with a voice of thunder, that we must die; while Scripture tells us, in language that we cannot misapprehend, however disbelieved by some, that our Judge is now standing even at the door; and while conscience unites with Scripture, in testifying that to meet him unprepared, will be to meet the fire that never shall be quenched. Oh! may sinners awaken from the torpor and insensibility in which they have hitherto continued—take hold of the gift and

hope of eternal life, which is the sure session of all who return to God by faith through Jesus Christ. Even now the air we breathe may be loaded with infection and mortality—even now the steps of those who are to carry our lifeless bodies, may be at hand—even now the spirits of our departed pastors, and companions, and fellow-worshippers, may be calling to another

to follow them to the eternal abode. Watch, therefore, and be ready—yea, let us be also ready, for we know not at what time our Lord may come. Let us not, then, procrastinate, but whatsoever our hands find to do, let us do it with all our might, seeing there is no work nor device, no knowledge nor wisdom, in the grave, whither we are all hastening.

ON WALKING WITH GOD;

A SERMON PREACHED ON MONDAY, 12th AUGUST, 1833, IN THE CHAPEL OF EASE, AUBION STREET, GLASGOW,

By the Rev. THOMAS BROWN, D.D.,

Minister of St. John's Church, Glasgow.

“And Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him.”—GEN. v. 24.

In casting our eye along the page of sacred history, we find the great proportion of our early race passed over in silence. Of the vast majority, the name is not even recorded, and of those whose names are mentioned, nothing is stated regarding them, but merely that they lived and died. Without doubt, in these days, as in our own, there were many who served God in their generation, and many too who were characterized by their forgetfulness of God, and their profligacy of manners; for, from the earliest ages, the tares and the wheat have been blended, and allowed to grow together. But although God has not seen fit to point out the distinguishing features of each character, either for encouragement, or for warning, he has, notwithstanding, set his mark on certain individuals, as beacons and monitors, and has signalized others as objects of special interest and regard. Here and there a name is mentioned, which appears as a star of the first magnitude in the spiritual firmament, whose beauty and lustre challenge universal admiration, and to whom the eyes of all are especially directed. Enoch is one of these bright examples. He is the second individual of the antediluvian worthies, to whom God has borne special testimony, as his witness for the truth, and as a preacher of righteousness. Very little is said of him in the page of sacred history, yet that little is full of meaning, singularly important, and impressively instructive. Moses tells us he walked with God; Paul tells us he pleased God, and walked by faith; and Jude informs us he was endowed with a prophetic

spirit, and announced the second coming of the Lord. Had Moses exhausted language in delineating the character of this eminent individual, the picture might have been more strongly coloured, but the features could not have been more distinct, than when he simply tells he walked with God. This mode of the delineation of character is frequently adopted by the Spirit of God, and with peculiarly felicitous effect. In a single sentence, or by a single word of the Spirit of God, is embraced what in the language of man might have required pages of illustration. Enoch was a good man—he was a man of God—he lived by faith—he trusted in God—he made God his refuge—he feared the Lord—his heart was fixed, trusting in the Lord—he walked with God. In Enoch the testimony of the Spirit of God is, that he walked with God, and that he was not: for God took him.

In treating of this subject, I shall endeavour, through the divine blessing, in the first place, to inquire into Enoch's state and character, pointed out to us by his walking with God; and, in the second place, advert to his reward. “He was not; for God took him.” Let us then inquire, in the first place, into the character of Enoch—he walked with God. This expression occurs repeatedly in Scripture, and is employed to characterize various eminent individuals in former times. It bespeaks practical godliness, vital personal religion, the devotedness of both heart and life unto God, the consecration of the whole man to his service. It is opposed to

that spirit and that course of life by which the wicked are characterized, who are said to be without God, to be alienated from the love of God, and to walk contrary to God, who think and act without any reference to him, and as if there were no God in the world. The expression intimates, that amid the various cares, and duties, and trials, of this mortal condition, of which, like other men, Enoch had his share, that amid his various, private, and public, secularizing engagements, he made religion the great business of his life, that his mind was engrossed with things divine, and that these were paramount in his estimation. He spiritualized every thing ; he brought God near to his mind, in all that he did, and in all that he said, and thus he made every thing in his life and history to bear upon his spiritual and moral existence, and to tell upon his eternal destiny. But, in treating of his character, I would observe more particularly, and, in the first place, that walking with God, implies a state of reconciliation and friendship with God. Like every other son of Adam, Enoch entered this world of ours a fallen, a corrupted, a lost sinner—a son of disobedience, a child of wrath, an heir of hell, with a heart alienated from God, and opposed to his very being, in enmity to God and his ways—in such a state, as is every-where represented in Scripture, is our condition by nature—far from God, without God, dead to every thing that is heavenly. And, in this state, it is possible, it is presumable, that he remained for many years ; for, it is stated, he “lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah ;” and then it is stated, he “walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years.” During this period, the mists of ignorance blinded his mind ; he lived unconcerned about God and divine things ; he lived at a distance from God. In this situation, the idea of walking with God is not even supposable. Association, for whatever purpose, always supposes friendship, and an opposite spirit supposes distance. “Can two,” says the prophet Amos, “walk together, except they be agreed ?” The existence of sin, and the love of sin, form a barrier of separation between God and the soul of every unrenewed man, which must, in some way or other, be removed, before there is a possibility of any harmony subsisting between the parties, before there can be any complacency in the divine mind towards the sinner, and before there can be any friendly feeling in the mind of a sinner

towards God. With every individual of the human race, there is the actual dependence of the creature upon the Creator, and the need of putting forth divine energy towards the existence of the creature ; but there do not exist in either party those sentiments and feelings that can bring them together ; for when the sinner cherishes a spirit of aversion to God, and carries about with him arms of hostility against his righteous sovereign, and is destitute of any feeling of dependence or trust in God, how is it possible that God in that state of alienation of heart and mind, can regard such a one with that favour he bears to his own ? Before such a union can take place, as is represented in the figure of the text, *walking with God*, the real circumstances and actual state between the offending and the offended party must have undergone a complete change. As all these obstructions, arising from guilt, that oppose this forgiveness, on the part of God to the sinner, must be removed, ere he regard him with a merciful eye, and admit him into a state of acceptance ; so the obstructions which prevent trust on the part of the sinner in God, must be removed, ere this mutual reconciliation can take place. And how is it, then, that this mutual reconciliation is effected ? Just by, and solely by, the mediation of Jesus Christ. He is the Mediator between God and Man. God and man meet, and can meet nowhere but with Christ. He lays his hand on both, and brings them into a state of reconciliation and friendship. He stays the enmity, and makes peace by the blood of his cross, and this is where, far from and at an immeasurable distance from each other, they are brought nigh, viz., by his atonement and perfect work. Never, never, had he visited this miserable world of ours, but to effect this reconciliation. It is unnecessary to state how this is brought about more than in general terms. It is a scriptural doctrine that, while enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son—that God, by Jesus Christ, has reconciled us to himself, not imputing our trespasses unto us—that Christ was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. In the face of Jesus Christ, God looks upon sinners with acceptance, and the sinner, looking by faith to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, beholds in this exhibition of mercy and grace, and love and obedience, such an apprehension of the divine character, that the enmity is destroyed, and the

once hateful, and hating, and obdurate sinner, is led to look on him with desire and delight, and is brought through the mercy of God in Christ, to regard him as a reconciled Father. Now, this state must be effected, before there can be any walking with God. What views Enoch, at this early age of the world, had of those Gospel truths we enjoy, is not made known to us; but living so near the period of man's original creation, and conversing, as he did, with our great primogenitor, and illuminated with the divine Spirit, it is natural to suppose that he must have had full instructions regarding the divine character, man's original state, his lamentable fall, and promised recovery; and looking through the mist of ages, and enabled to foretell the second coming of Christ, we may conclude, that he was informed of the original promise, of the great purpose regarding man, and of the manifestation and work of Him who was slain, from the foundation of the world. This is certain, that he was through Christ reconciled to God—that he lived in that **faith**, without which it is impossible to please God, and that, however much or little his mind was illuminated on the great object of faith, on that object his faith did repose, and through that medium he looked to God, and rejoiced in God. And what **was** his state, must be ours, if we walk with God. On the great Mediator we must rely; to the scheme of redemption we must yield our ready submission; and to us it must be a saying that is faithful; it must receive our cordial acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and on him we must cast the whole burden of our deliverance and salvation; God in Christ must be all our salvation, and all our desire, if we walk with God.

But I observe, in the second place, that this walking with God denotes an habitual being as in the divine presence. Ungodly men desire to withdraw themselves, if they could, from the eye of Omniscience. The consciousness of living in, and indulging and relishing, that course which is displeasing to the God of purity, and the conviction that the God of justice must bring them to account, lead them to wish, either that they could be hid from God's all-seeing eye, or that God were such a one as they themselves are. If they have any just idea of God, this must be their natural feeling, for the consciousness of the divine inspection cannot but blight and wither every en-

joyment that is sinful, cannot but disturb that peace which is unsound, and render wicked men a terror to themselves, if they think at all. This was the feeling of Adam when he attempted to hide himself from the glance of heaven, and this was the feeling of Jonah when he foolishly sought to counteract the divine will and fled from the presence of Jehovah. But with the great bulk of sinners there is such a hardihood in sin, such a blindness of mind and deadness of feeling, that all realizing sense of God's presence is lost, and there is a living, and speaking, and acting, as if there was no God, as if his eye did not penetrate the thick veil with which they cover themselves. Men are in a most melancholy state when this is their feeling, and when they lose sight and realization of Him in whom they live, and move, and have their being, and who is their constant witness. They, indeed, live without God in the world, and it is hard to say whether they will be carried by sin when every restraint of God's presence is withdrawn. But this indifference to the inspection of Jehovah does not characterize merely the utterly profligate. Wherever there is the indulgence of sin in the heart, of pride, and vanity, and hatred, and malice, or wherever there is a veil of hypocrisy employed to conceal the inward deformity of heart, or in whatever way the semblance of religion is to be found, without its practical power being felt—there is there, without doubt, a forgetfulness of the divine omniscience, a practical disbelief of the truth that the eye of God is in every place beholding the evil and the good, and that there is no darkness nor shadow of death which can conceal from the inspection of Him who neither slumbers nor sleeps, of Him that searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the children of men. But the man who walks with God places himself, as it were, in the divine presence, feels that God has his eye ever upon him, lives as seeing God who is invisible, and knows that God is just as conversant with his every thought, and wish, and feeling, and desire, as his most open and broad transactions. The thought of the divine presence, the realizing impression of God being constantly with him, keeps him alive to duty, reconciles his mind to every event the most varied; for the doctrine of the divine presence, while it operates as an antidote against sin, and leads the Christian to fear lest he should disobey his heavenly Father, stops not here, but stimulates and

animates a child of God to do and to bear all that is pleasing to his Father in heaven, while the wish of every wicked man is that God did not exist, or that he did not see or did not consider. Oh! what a dreary wilderness would this world be, and in what a cheerless state would the heart of a child of God be found, were there a possibility of God living and not beholding him continually, and were it not the animating principle of his life, "The Lord sees me." Oh! we need some correction against sin, to which there is proneness in the heart, and we need something to bear us up, too, under the vicissitudes and trials of life. I cannot conceive any thing better to accomplish both these purposes, than that the Lord sees us continually. It was the admonition of a heathen moralist to his disciples that they should invariably place themselves as under the eye of some great and virtuous man to deter them from vice and stimulate them to virtue. But surely when an individual places himself, not under the eye of a feeble worm like himself, but under the inspection of Him whose eye is like a flaming fire, whose majesty and glory are undivided and incomprehensible, the impression must be much more powerful than if the eyes of the whole universe of God were directed to him singly. And how much must the cup of affliction lose of its bitterness when it is borne in mind that the Father of mercies witnesses all we endure, and knows, and marks exactly, the weight, and degree, and nature, and design of our endurance. No doubt every child of God feels that he has nothing in the sight of God to merit divine forgiveness, that his sins are such as might justly expose him to the wrath of that holy Being who charges his very angels with folly, that his services are lighter than the very air, and vanity itself, and that his sufferings are infinitely less than he merits at God's hand. Still, withal, he thinks that he lives in the presence of Him who suffers not a sparrow to fall to the ground unnoticed—of Him who knows his frame and remembers he is dust—of Him who, as a father, compassionates his child, and assures him that, notwithstanding all his worthlessness, and sinfulness, and doubts, and fears, and frequent misgivings, and the contempt and persecution to which he may be exposed in this sinful world, he is not forgotten by God, is not neglected nor forsaken by his Father in heaven—that every thing regarding him individually is noticed by God's eye, is

treasured up in God's remembrance, and will turn to his well-being ultimately. Under this impression David says, "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living"—"I have set the Lord always before me." But as he that walks with God sees God every-where, and feels that he cannot go where the presence of God is not felt, he also sees God in every thing, in all his works, in all his creatures, in all his dispensations, in all his enjoyments, in all his trials—every thing is full of God to him, and he cannot turn his eye to a single object in nature, and he cannot turn his attention to a single event in life, whether he is personally interested or not, without recognising the working of an all-wise and all-gracious mind, without marking the agency of an omnipotent and divine arm, without seeing and witnessing the presence of an unseen God. The sun cannot shine, the darkness cannot settle on the earth, the dews and the rains cannot distil, the thunders cannot roll, nor the lightnings glare, wars cannot rage nor peace rest on the earth, not a trouble can overtake him, not a privilege, temporal or spiritual, can he enjoy, without his seeing that the Lord is there, without his descrying the operation of Him who does according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. And this walking with God, this seeing God in every thing, is sanctified to a child of God. Every kind dispensation becomes doubly sweet, affliction becomes a mercy, and God is discerned in every thing, God is glorified in every thing.

But I observe again, that walking with God denotes familiarity of intercourse and communion with him. I question that this may be the principal idea that is intended by the sacred historian in the figure here employed. This communion with God, this friendly intercourse between God and man, was forfeited and cut off by sin, but it is restored by grace. The way of access to God was shut up by disobedience, and man might not venture into the divine presence, might not venture to pray to God, might not venture to hope for mercy, till God was pleased to appoint a new and living way through the medium of the new covenant, ratified and sealed by the Redeemer's blood. A mercy-seat has been erected where God and man might meet, a channel has been opened up in which our sacrifices might be accepted, and divine blessings might reach our souls in copious streams. We cannot know in what way intercourse with heaven

was carried on in these early days, and particularly with Enoch. By the appointed sacrifices and prescribed mode of worship in these antediluvian days, he, without doubt, maintained fellowship with God, and God, by immediate revelation, by dreams and visions, and perhaps by audible voices, and by visible and audible manifestations of his presence, made himself known to Enoch. Such manifestations were made to Abraham, Moses talked with God face to face, and it is presumable that the same might be Enoch's privilege. At all events he walked with God, and God conversed with him in condescending familiarity. Though living on earth he was like a citizen of heaven. Friends who associate together have, as it were, but one heart. To each other they unbosom all their joys and sorrows, their hopes and fears, their difficulties and doubts, and consult each other under all perplexities and trials. And thus we may suppose Enoch walking with God and acting towards God. Taking Jehovah for his friend, he unbosomed his whole soul, to him he laid open his inmost wishes and desires, told him of all his fears, wants, sufferings, and sorrows, and sins, and solicited his gracious counsel, and assistance, and support. Do we not envy this holy patriarch—do we not desire the same holy intercourse and communion with God? The privilege of communion with God is not peculiar to him, and notwithstanding all the special manifestations of God's presence in patriarchal times, all that they saw was dark and visionary compared to the light and views we enjoy under the dispensation of the Gospel. And what was applied to John the Baptist we may apply to ourselves in respect of knowledge and privilege. The least in the kingdom of heaven, the least under the dispensation of the gospel, is greater than he. Even prophets rejoiced to see afar off that dispensation we see. We are admitted to equal and greater privileges, to equal, nay, closer, more intimate, communion than even they were. We may not avail ourselves of our privileges, we may be straitened in our own souls, but we are not straitened in God. We have better ordinances, mediums of intercourse more large, more clear light, more full harmonies, more animating hopes, and more powerful assistances. We have the same God to go to. God in the flesh has come near to us, and God in the flesh has arisen to heaven, that we may obtain nearer access to heaven. We have a friend in the

court of heaven who has carried our nature thither, and lives to make intercession for us. We have the Spirit to help our infirmities and teach us to pray, and we are each of us made kings and priests unto God our father. Unworthy and sinful though we are, we have boldness to enter the holiest of all by the blood of atonement, and although the sight of God's justice and holiness, contrasted with our own guilt and sinfulness, may make us tremble, still our faith may and ought, to lay hold on divine goodness and divine grace manifested in Jesus Christ—and the remembrance that our great High Priest has passed into the heavens ought to encourage us to come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help us in every time of need. Every saint, then, who, like Enoch, walks with God, is admitted to close intercourse with him, and between God and every genuine believer there is a familiarity, a friendship, a communion maintained, of which a stranger to close and intimate walking with God can know nothing. There are secrets that he discloses and pours into the bosom of his friend in heaven, that he would not disclose to the most attached bosom companion on earth. There are transactions carried on between God and his soul to which none is, and none can be, privy but God. The spiritual wants under which he labours, the spiritual maladies and distresses under which he groans, the sorrows with which he is agonized, the difficulties and toils with which he is oppressed, which it would be vain and fruitless to make known to man, he cheerfully, willingly, gladly, discloses to God. But besides these the inward workings of iniquity, the sinful risings of the thoughts and desires, or the criminality and baseness, of his heart—which are known to God and God alone and his own mind—these are what concern him and many connected with him, and which, for a world, he would not acknowledge to men, all which he pours out with perfect freedom into the bosom of his God. He knocks at the door of heaven—he gains admission, and in the very act of prayer, in the very duty of asking, he feels his oppressed soul unburdened, his inward wants relieved, his spiritual maladies healed, his secret griefs assuaged, and he understands the import of the promise, "Before they call I will answer, and while they are speaking I will hear." Oh! how little do these souls know what they lose by neglecting to hold con-

munion with God and near intercourse in the ordinances of his grace, in the word, in sacraments, and in prayer—the inward peace, the purifying love, that are thus obtained, by walking like this man of God. Let none say that, like Enoch, he walks with God, who seeks not Christ in the ordinances of his grace. He is walking not with God—he is walking with the world in the sight of his own eyes—he is living without God.

But, I observe again, that to walk with God is to possess and cherish the highest affection and esteem for him. Wherever there is friendly association, close intimacy, and walking together, there will of necessity be much tenderness of affection. The company of him who has not a stronghold of the heart will not be courted with solicitude. He will seldom be present to the mind, or he will be present to it with indifference, but wherever hearts are closely linked together they cannot live, unless from necessity, long distant from each other. When you see Jonathan you may conclude that David is not far distant. Affection is the very essence of friendship, and you derelict the very appellation when you separate them. When it is said that Enoch walked with God, you see that he loved God, that he loved him supremely. His love rose above every other principle and bore down and extinguished, or, at least, kept in sub serviency, every other object of endearment. God obtained the ascendancy—God was the portion of his soul, and he says in sincerity, “Whom have I in the heavens but thee ; and there is nothing on earth which my heart desires compared with thee.” Now this is not a feeling peculiar to Enoch. It enters deeply into every christian character, and we speak absurdly when we speak of the piety or of the religion of any one in whose heart love does not reign. Knowledge, and zeal, and beneficence, are nothing without charity, and surely if clear views of divine character, and extraordinary manifestations of divine love, are fitted to kindle and keep alive a more intense flame, our love should burn with peculiar effulgence. We have such an exhibition of the gracious attributes of God, such a revelation of God’s love and good-will to men, and such expression of God’s providential mercy, and, above all, such discoveries of his redeeming grace, that we might naturally conclude, that if the sentiment bore any proportion to the disclosures that are made, and the means employed, we should love him supremely ; our love should be superlative ; for the discoveries

of the love of God made to us, just as far exceed in extent those made to Enoch as the sun’s mid-day glory exceeds that of his morning rays. We do not wonder that a God unknown, unknown from necessity, or from perverse disinclination, is neither loved, nor esteemed nor adored—but how the matchlessness of divine excellence can be exhibited to the sight, and how the boundlessness of divine love and grace can be unfolded to view, and how there can be a perpetual participation of divine mercy and love, how the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation, can be made known, without exciting admiration and warming the heart with the purest affection, is inconceivable on any other ground but that the heart of man is lost to the admiration of all that is great, and glorious, and lovely, and that there is a natural ungodliness and alienation of the soul from God, and that, though having eyes, they see not, and hearts, they do not feel. We actually see objects the most worthless and uninteresting set our rightful sovereign aside, and usurp that place in our affections which is, and ought to be, his. Oh ! let us, then, pray to him that he may restore his own influence, and that with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, we may regard him, and that we may be led to suffer other objects to have such a place in our regard as God warrants, and to admire and love them because they are God’s creatures, and because his hand and his goodness are discovered in the conferring of them. Oh ! let us meditate on God’s own manifestation of divine love till the fire kindled and burns within us with a devouring-like flame, and let us never conclude that we are walking with God unless we are walking in the love of God, and every thought and desire is in his favour. Walk with him we never can unless we love him supremely.

But I observe, in the last place, that to walk with God, is to live devoted to his will and his service. True religion has its seat in the heart, and it consists in the affections, in the inward sentiments, being conformed to the divine image and will, and in vain do we look for genuine vital Christianity, without this subjection of the inward man to God. But, then, while there is a new principle, there is also outward conformity to the will of God. The requirements of the Gospel bind and subject the whole man to the Lord. The tree is known by its fruits, and if the tree is good, the fruit that it bears will be the fruit

of righteousness. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and by the inward dispositions the conduct is regulated. Our saying to Christ, Lord, Lord, is not sufficient. No professions are of any avail, if the life is not conformable to the will of God. "If a man love me," says Christ, "he will keep my sayings." He that saith he abideth in Christ, ought himself to walk as he walked. Wherever there are close intimacy and affection of heart, there is unity of manners, as well as of feeling. Where there is unity of heart, there is unity of views, design, and action. We insensibly, and almost of necessity, imbibe the sentiments and habits of thinking, and copy the modes of speaking of those whom we admire and associate with. The world took knowledge of Christ's followers, that they had been with Jesus. They appeared to have been cast in the same mould—the mind that was in Christ they had—they walked as he walked. And wherever the true followers of Christ are, whatever their colour, whatever language they speak, they are the same, they are distinguished by the same badge, they bear the same yoke, they walk by the same rule, they mind the same things. Walking with God, is often, in Scripture language, called walking in his law, walking in his statutes, keeping his commands, doing that which is well-pleasing in his sight, and following of the Lamb whithersoever he goes; and a not walking with God, is acting contrary to God's will. But we are not to think, that walking according to external forms, is walking with God; for, as there may be communication without love, hearing without faith, where there is all the outward homage, and all the outward respect that can be required or wished, so in every other act, religious or moral, there may be an outward compliance without the inward feeling corresponding to it, which alone gives it acceptance; for a child of God may not perform a single action that a sinner may not perform, and yet between the character of each, there is just as wide a difference as between the semblance and the reality, the shadow and the substance. The life and conversation of the ungodly man, whatever semblance they bear to God, have no reference to divine authority, no reference to the love of God in the heart, and therefore he is not looking to Jesus, he is not walking with God—his conversation is self-interest, or self-applause, or worldly advantage, or human respect, or some such low motive; and, therefore, however fair the fruit may be, it

is rotten at the core; and, however specious the action, when analyzed it will not stand the test: it is a walking not after the Spirit, but after the flesh. But that man who walks with God, is constantly saying, Lord, what will thou have me to do? He calls no man father or master—there is a habitual looking to the footsteps of the great Shepherd—there is a constant eyeing of Christ, a constant aim of pleasing him, and acting conformably to his will—there is a constant living under the influence of divine direction, under reliance on the divine aid, for strength and grace, drawn from above. He lives, yet not he, but Christ lives in him. I need not enter into a minute description of the Christian's walk and conversation. It is god-like, however imperfect it may be. It has many defects, many short-comings, and before the eye of Omiscience, must be marked not only as defective and unprofitable, but as rebellious and sinful; for who has not cause to say and pray? "Cleanse thou me from secret faults; keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins." Still, the divine law written on his heart, and the divine statutes engraven on his inward part, it is the desire of his whole soul to obey God, and to serve his Lord and Master. And in all his plans and purposes, God is consulted, God's will is respected, and nothing appears of such paramount importance, as to please God. For such a one to live, and not make his life subservient to the divine glory—to live, and to live in rebellion against the divine will—to live, and to live without God—to live, and yet to live inconsistent with his profession, and so as to dishonour the cause of his Redeemer—to live, and not to live unto the Lord, would be to a child of God death in the very thought; and thus, not men's will, nor his own will, nor the example of the world, but the command of God, the honour of his Master, however much it may subject him to difficulty, and scorn, and persecution, in this sinful and wicked world, is the animating spring and motive of his conduct.

Thus may we suppose Enoch walked with God, and thus will every individual walk who follows Enoch's principles. His life will be a life of near intercourse with God, a living in a state of friendship, familiarity and steady obedience to him—a living by faith in his word, a dependence on his grace, and submission to his will.

I should proceed, according to the second division of the subject, to Enoch's reward. "He was not; for God took him." On this,

But though the original application of this subject was to the consolation of the first Christians, suffering for faith and a good conscience, and though in our case also it is more directly applicable to the losses and troubles of any kind to which our adherence to truth and duty may expose us, yet, without straining, it may be applied for our consolation under any of the afflictions of the present life. Of all our afflictions, that to which it may be most directly applied, is the grievous bereavement which we suffer in the loss of virtuous friends. But strong is the consolation which the Gospel offers to the true disciples of Jesus, even when mourning the loss of their best and dearest. Severely, indeed, they feel the loss of those to whom they were united by natural affection or friendship, and whom they loved as the disciples of their own Master. But in duty to their God, and Father in Christ, they ought not to mourn; and, if they use aright their faith and their privilege as his children, they will not sorrow like those who have no hope. Let those only yield to such sorrow as unfit for duty and admits of no consolation, who know that they have lost the objects of their love, and despair of ever finding them again. If our departed friends were children of God by faith in Christ, they are now fellow-citizens with the saints in heaven. Such, my brethren, you cannot but believe, was the true character of the pastor, who, for these five and twenty years, has been administering among you the word and sacraments of Christ. The duties of his ministerial office he performed not only with great ability, but with great zeal and pleasure, because he believed in Jesus, and because he sincerely loved both the truth and the holiness of his Redeemer. I am not going to enter into a particular delineation of his virtues. They were, indeed, both many and great, but I am not able to do justice to his character, and though I were ever so able I could not venture, in regard either to your feelings or to my own, to speak at large of his talents, his principles, or his temper. But most of you know as well as, and many of you much better than, I can express, the worth of this eminently faithful and useful minister of Christ. Indeed, I am persuaded that, by all of this congregation who were capable of forming a just opinion, he was both revered and loved.

And no wonder. For to promote your growth in grace, and your improvement in holiness, was the earnest desire of his heart, and with great industry, as well as skill, did he labour for your spiritual good. He never dealt in those loose and unstudied effusions which, though they may please the ignorant hearer, or may enable a careless teacher to keep up the semblance of copiousness of thought and variety of subject, are seldom very useful even to those who like them best, and never fail to excite disgust in persons of information and discernment. His discourses, delivered from this place, were prepared with care—so well were they prepared that, whilst they were useful even to the least informed, they gave both pleasure and instruction to persons of knowledge and judgment. Much did Providence do for your spiritual good in sending such a minister to labour among you, in continuing his ministry so long; and not a few of you, I trust, will be found his joy and crown at the day of his Lord. Such of you as have received no improvement from his teaching and example, if any such there be, would do well to consider carefully how remiss you have been in your duty. Very remiss you must have been. Your Pastor was both able and faithful. And whether you ever be brought or not to repent of your sins and be reconciled to your God, his labours, we doubt not, have found acceptance with his Lord; for not only does the charity, which thinketh no evil, readily hope well of a man who was so active and zealous in the duties of his office, whose life was so inoffensive, and whose manners were so gentle and so kind, but in this case no proof, by which one erring mortal can know with certainty, the good principles and aims of another—no proof is wanting to convince us that our friend died in the Lord, having kept the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ.

Whilst, therefore, we feel deeply our loss let us think of the good hope and of the strong consolation which the gospel offers even in the heaviest of our bereavements. Our excellent friend, who loved us much, is indeed departed, and never again in this world shall we see his face. But they who die in Christ live in a better world, where they rest from all that is irksome in duty, and where all earthly labours and sufferings are more than compensated.

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LECTURE by the Rev. CHARLES J. BROWN, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. JOHN FRENCH, Edinburgh.

Price 2*l.*

THE CHOICE OF MOSES;
A LECTURE DELIVERED
By the Rev. CHARLES J. BROWN,

Minister of Anderston Chapel, Glasgow.

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."
—HEB. xi. 24—26.

THERE are two principal ways which God makes use of in his word to enforce his law upon us—precept and example. Each method has advantages peculiar to itself. Precept has the advantage of greater exactness and accuracy, example of greater persuasiveness. Precept is more precise in conveying its information; but example, by embodying the precept in living characters, and showing its practicability has a peculiar fitness for winning the heart and the affections. In the character of Moses, as it is here drawn by the inspired writer, we have set before us some of the most difficult, yet necessary and fundamental lessons that belong to the life of a Christian. While God is commanding these to us, by arraying them in the loveliness of an example eminently attractive, let us endeavour, as we go along, to apply them to ourselves in the way of trial, encouragement and direction, as our several cases may require.

To enter into the spirit of this passage, it will be right to refresh our memories with the brief accounts elsewhere given us of the earlier days of Moses. Turn, then, to Exod. ii. 1—11, and to Acts vii. 21—23. There can be little doubt after the comparison of these texts, that the period to which the Apostle refers, when he speaks of Moses being come to years, and then refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, was that age of forty years complete, at which, Stephen in-

forms us, "it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel." During the first forty years of his life, he had been treated by the daughter of Pharaoh as her own son; nor is it a conjecture altogether without support in the inspired narrative as well as in the Jewish tradition, that he was designed ultimately to succeed to the crown. However this may be, it is certain that he had received the education and the treatment generally which were proper to the grandson of so great a monarch; that he had cultivated all the learning of his age and country with that success which would have qualified him for acting an illustrious part in the court of Egypt; and that his prospects of worldly advancement were altogether of the brightest kind. Moses, however, had heard of the promises made of old by the God of heaven to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, his progenitors. These promises he believed in, though the condition of his countrymen was then such as seemed only to throw contempt upon them. He believed that Messiah would yet come of the despised seed of Abraham; and that Jehovah not only would bring his people into the earthly Canaan, but that, having covenanted to be himself the God and portion of his people, he had prepared for them a far more glorious inheritance than this—an inheritance corresponding in excellence and duration with his own infinite resources.

and to which he would, in due time, bring all his faithful servants, whatever might have been their condition in this transitory world. Through the power of this divine faith dwelling in his soul from day to day, Moses lost all relish for the pleasures, the honours, and the people of Egypt. Amidst the gaieties and splendour of its court, his heart was with his brethren, the thought of whose iron bondage made pleasure nauseous to his soul. Up to this period, indeed, he had been led by the providence of God to remain in the court of Egypt, that he might there acquire that knowledge of the world, and of the arts and sciences which was destined to prove of so much service to him in his future character of legislator and conductor of Israel. But that end had now been fully answered; and, having seen that by his hand God was to deliver his people, as well as that he could not permanently retain his present rank without renouncing his allegiance to Jehovah, Moses cheerfully cast the court of Egypt behind him, refusing any longer to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

That you may see, however, the glory of that victory over the world which Moses thus through faith achieved, observe the particular circumstances in which he abandoned his relation to the daughter of Pharaoh. We are told that it was when he was "*come to years*." It was not the rash act of impetuous youth, but the cool, deliberate choice of maturer years. Neither was it the act of one grown grey in the service of the world, and casting it away at length in disgust, when no longer able to retain it or to shine among its votaries. It is no uncommon thing for men, after giving the vigour of their powers to sin and the devil, to offer the fag-end of them to God, hoping first to get all that Mammon can give, and then all that Christ can give. Moses, at forty, a man of the finest accomplishments, qualifying him to shine in any station, even the highest, in these circumstances casts the Egyptian court behind him. Neither was the country which he forsook any contemptible object of worldly ambition. It was full of sin to be sure; but that would have been no disparagement to it in the eye of an unholly man; and we know that it was illustrious for wealth, for magnificence, and for every kind of polite learning. It is worthy of remark also, that had Moses been desirous of an excuse for remaining in the court of Egypt, he might have found a very

plausible one in the plea of gratitude to his benefactress, whose kindness in sparing his life and treating him as her son, seemed to deserve another return than the refusal of the honour. Duty to God with Moses outweighed all this.

We shall find new and interesting light thrown upon the feelings and conduct of Moses in the 25th verse; "choosing rather"—he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter—"choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Here observe, in the first place, what that condition was for which Moses deliberately exchanged the ease and affluence of Pharaoh's court. It was a state of positive affliction. It was not the exchange of one set of worldly comforts for another, but of a palace for a life of difficulty, danger, and self-denial, in communion with a people who at the time Moses cast in his lot among them, were utterly despised, and lay helpless beneath the rod of powerful oppressors. But then, as the *pleasures* of the Egyptian court, whatever attractions they might have for others, had none for the soul of this man, so the afflictions for which he exchanged them, were sweetened to him by the consideration that they were the afflictions of Israel—identified with the cause and the people of his God; for you will observe again, here, the expression, "*affliction with the people of God*." It was not mere patriotism or love of kindred that influenced the choice of Moses; he chose to suffer affliction with the people of God as such, and for the cause of God as his cause, like another kindred spirit of a later period. "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory."

But while the choice of Moses was thus a religious choice, it was also in the highest degree rational; as, indeed, religion and right reason ever coincide. It is very probable that some of those about Pharaoh's court, who witnessed the conduct of Moses, would set him down as a man in whom superstition had gained the ascendancy over reason and common sense. They were the fools, however, not he. He chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin "*for a season*." He considered that, even were the pleasures of the luxurious court more attractive in themselves than to him they were,

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still they were perishing—could at best be enjoyed only for a few years, and even for those few years not without drawing down the displeasure of an infinite God. He argued, on the other hand, that the afflictions he might be called to endure, were likewise but for a season, and would speedily give place to a blessedness with whose excellency they were not worthy to be compared. Oh! that men of the world who talk of reason, would but follow reason; that they would seriously reflect how short-lived at least, if they will not let us say how intrinsically contemptible, are those pleasures whose sake they are content to live as if there were no eternity, as if there were either no God, or if it were a thing indifferent whether his authority be acknowledged by his creatures, or trampled by them under foot. Could you but enjoy these pleasures always, why then there might be at least some show of reason for the preference you give them above the favour of the blessed God. But when you consider how “short is the triumphing of the wicked,” how short also the afflictions of the righteous, and how glorious his everlasting portion, do you not see that you are verily playing the fool, and that the path which and religion alike point out is the choice of Moses, when turning his back on sensual and idolatrous Egypt, he cast in his lot with the people of God?

To open up still further to us the views and feelings of Moses in refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, it is added in verse 26, that he “esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.” The reproach of Christ—that is, the reproach cast upon the Church, the body of Christ, and which, from his unity to the Church, and the love he bears to it, he accounts his own reproach. Christ was far beyond the reach of suffering in his own person, when he said to Saul, “Why persecutest thou me?” Observe, also, that the reproach of the Old Testament Church is called the reproach of Christ; for he was the king and head of that, as well as of the Gospel Church. To speak strictly, indeed, there has never been any other than one Church of Christ under different dispensations. Now Moses, in making up his mind to abandon his relationship to Pharaoh's daughter, was fully aware that he must endure not only affliction, but, what is more difficult of endurance by a man

accustomed to honour—reproach. He was about to make common cause with the despised and oppressed Hebrews; and he knew enough of the world to know that, however it might honour him, so long as he did not openly protest against its ways, it loved him too little, and its own courses too much, not to scorn and persecute him, when he should have assumed the attitude of an open and determined enemy to its procedure. Not only, however, did he leave the Egyptian court *in spite of* the world's reproach;

are here told that he actually esteemed it riches—“greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.” The treasures of Egypt he accounted poverty, the reproach of Christ, riches. It was not that he loved the reproach and hatred of men, nor that he was incapable of feeling them keenly and painfully; but he loved Christ more than the love of men; and if Christ, and his people, and cause, must suffer reproach, he will have his share of it, and will count himself more happy and honoured in it, than in the applause of the most magnificent court in the world. Here again, however, Moses acted not only religiously, but most rationally; *“for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.”* He considered that all the treasures which Egypt, or its court could bestow on him would speedily end in vanity. On the other hand, he saw by faith that if Christ, the Almighty Redeemer of the Church, took such a concern in its reproaches as to esteem them his own, then, not content with bringing his people to the inheritance which he had covenanted to bestow on them, he would not fail to turn their reproaches for his sake into riches, by crowning them with more eminent tokens of regard. Moses fixed his eye on *the end of Christ's reproach and of Egypt's glory*; and, clearly discerning that even the severest trials that might be connected with Christ's cause, were not only honourable from their connexion with him, but actually carried along with them the greatest and truest riches, he was, by all these considerations, sickened with the godless joys of the world, and, glorying even in tribulations and reproaches, he took his leave of Egypt and all that pertained to it. A great deal of very precious instruction may be drawn from this passage. I would remind you of some of the principal lessons which it teaches.

1st. We have in the passage a fine illustration of the power of faith in overcoming the world. Here is a victory infinitely more

noble than the conquests of Alexander, won by Moses over his own spirit and an ungodly world. He overcame "*by faith*," that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;" and "this is the victory which still overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

2dly. Learn from the passage that true faith is an operative principle, manifesting itself in such victories as these. Try by this test, brethren, what your faith is worth. Did it ever manifest itself in mortification of the flesh, in self-denial, in the casting away of sinful pleasures for the sake of Christ, &c.

3dly. True religion is the result of deliberation. Christ being put in the one scale and the world in the other, religion deliberately prefers Christ above all other things.

4thly. We are reminded by the passage, that those sinful pleasures which the Christian is called to renounce, are by him renounced the more easily, through the power of those glorious realities which faith opens up to his view; as, on the other hand, the

trials which he is called to endure are by the same means more easily borne.

5thly. The worst of Christ's cause is preferable to the best of the world's—Christ's reproach to the world's riches.

6thly. It is a sight peculiarly grateful, to witness a man exchanging the pleasures of sin for the service of God, while he might yet shine among the world's votaries, were he so disposed.

7thly. Christians may and ought to have respect to "the recompence of the reward," to quicken them in duty, and strengthen them in the midst of difficulties and temptations.

Finally. Let us make use of the whole subject for encouragement in the good ways of the Lord. Are we called to suffer afflictions for Christ's sake? "Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory." Reproach? "If we be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are we; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon us. Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." Amen.

THE SACRIFICES WHICH PAUL WAS WILLING TO MAKE IN THE CAUSE OF CHRIST;

A SERMON PREACHED

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"What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."—ACTS xxi. 13.

WHEN Paul uttered these words, he was on his return from one of those Christian missions in which he had so zealously embarked for the spread of the gospel. In this, and in a preceding mission, he had visited some of the most celebrated regions and renowned cities of the world. With unabated step, he had toiled his way over no small portion of Syria, Arabia, Asia Minor, and Europe. He had sailed the waters of the Mediterranean sea. He had coursed his track among those innumerable islands that so beautifully stud the Grecian Archipelago. On the soil of ancient Troy—along the classic shores of Greece—at Antioch, Ephesus, Philippi, Corinth, and Athens, he had planted the standard of the cross, and proclaimed that

Jesus of Nazareth was the Saviour of the world.

In the performance of this arduous duty he had passed through many perils, suffered many hardships, and been the victim of the most atrocious persecution and cruelty. Those places now named, may indeed be famed for many things, in history, in fable, and in song; but amid all their other celebrity, for this also they have obtained an infamous notoriety;—that when one of the most benevolent men whom the world ever saw, spoke to them in the language of truth and soberness, they mercilessly treated him as the veriest wretch that ever society hunted out of its pale.

But if Paul had his share of sufferings, he had his triumphs too. The gospel pres-

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pered in his hand. His Divine Master gave him souls for his hire. His fellest enemies were at times given him as the trophies of his faithfulness, patience and heroism. He who in the same night thrust Paul's feet into the stocks, and consigned him, all scourged and wounded as he was, to the deepest dungeon of a prison—that very same person, on that very same night, lay trembling as a penitent at his feet, bathing his wounds, asking the way of salvation, and humbly receiving the baptism of a Christian at his hands.

The gospel which Paul thus taught to thousands, was, in these its early days, a powerful, fruitful principle. They who embraced it, felt its softening influence melt their hearts, and prompt them to all the charities of life. They gave with no niggard hand to the support of the gospel, and to the relief of the poor. And as the poor Christians in Jerusalem were at this time suffering many privations, it would appear, that, collections having been made in the most of those Gentile churches which Paul had planted, the Apostle himself was sent as their honoured almoner, to carry this their bounty to their suffering brethren in Jerusalem. It is in the prosecution of this object we meet with him in our text. As the Apostle proceeded on his journey, he received many, and these by no means obscure intimations, that this journey to Jerusalem was to be eminently perilous. He tells us, that in every city to which he came, the Holy Ghost witnessed that bonds and afflictions awaited him. Apprised of such a fact as this, no wonder that his attached friends might wish to save a life so dear and so valuable as was Paul's. And, however questionable and ill-judged, their interference with the course of events which the Holy Ghost foretold, it was no doubt, on their part, a well-meant kindness to the devoted Paul. Accordingly, when first he landed at Tyre, and now when he had reached Cesarea, his christian friends in both places, most earnestly besought him not to go up to that Jerusalem that had killed so many prophets, stoned so many of God's messengers, and upon whose inhabitants was to be charged all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, to the blood of Zacharias whom they slew between the temple and the altar.

But Paul's was never the craven heart of a coward. Tell him where duty lay, and no terrors could shake his soul, or turn him

from his invincible attachment to Christ and his cause. While sensibly alive therefore to these, the intense sympathies and melting entreaties of friendship, we hear him replying with all the passionate fervour of a saint, and all the resolute heroism of a martyr—"What mem ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

This text presents two topics for illustration.

1. *The sacrifices* which Paul was willing to make in the cause of Christ.

II. *The exalted object* for which he was willing to make these sacrifices—it was for the name of the Lord Jesus.

It is only to the first of these topics that we shall at present call your attention. We are then, in this discourse, to illustrate the sacrifices which Paul was willing to make in the cause of Christ.

1. And here I remark, that the spirit of our text implies that Paul was willing to sacrifice his ease and comfort, and to devote all the energies of his body and soul to the honour of Christ's name.

The spirit of our text, we say, warrants this specification. For here the mere toil of voyaging by sea and travelling by land in this his present mission, implies no mean sacrifice of ease, and no mean expenditure of laborious exertion. The whole of Paul's apostolical life was an illustration of his willingness to do and bear the utmost of which humanity is capable. Of his mere travels alone, those parts of Scripture which describe them afford us but the scantiest itinerary. A brief chapter will at times comprehend the toil and travel of many thousand miles. Had Paul passed over these in the lady-like fashion of many modern tourists, enjoying all those helps and appliances which science, art and luxury, can now supply, many might have envied him the pleasure of visiting some of the loveliest regions of the globe. But when we hear him saying of himself, and of his fellow-apostles, "Even unto the present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our hands; being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things. And when, with more precise reference to himself, we hear him enu-

morate the catalogue of his sufferings, " In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things which are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who

is weak, and I am not weak? who is flended, and I burn not?"—and still farther, my friends, when we contemplate not only these, properly speaking, his passive toils, but also his more active strenuous efforts to save souls—when we think of him toiling with his hands to earn a bit of bread, while he distributed so magnificently the bread of life to others—when we think of him planting so many churches, watering those already planted, preaching in synagogues, and in all places of public resort, visiting from house to house, writing epistles, reasoning with the learned, grappling with the enemies of civil liberty, and asserting the sacred rights of freedom, declaiming before a Felix, a Festus, and an Agrippa, with an eloquence more powerful than that " which fulminated over Greece, and shook the throne of Macedon"—in short, when we think of him as doing every thing, and attempting every thing, whereby he might win souls to Jesus, we feel that we live in the age of little men, that christian character is dwarfed by the barrenness of a degenerate age, and that, would we do for Christ all that duty binds us to do, we must look to such examples as that of Paul, and strive to catch from him that burning zeal for the Redeemer's honour, which existed and flamed so mightily in his ardent soul. Ah! truly, these were not the days, when men, affecting to be the successors of a Paul and of the other Apostles, were charioted along in the gilded vehicles of fashion, mitred, erosered, and flaunting in all the pomp of episcopal parade—these were not the times when men, called christian bishops, had become pampered stipendiaries for doing nothing—

no, nothing, save to embroil nations—like wolves to scare the sheep from Christ's fold; or if, in shepherd's clothing, they at times spoke and acted for Christianity, to do it in a manner enough to freeze the soul into the coldness of spiritual death. It is not to these, my christian friends, we bid you look for a pattern, or to learn the lessons of Christianity. We exhibit to you one of more ethereal soul. We place before you a safer, a better, a brighter example. We hold up to your gaze the example of a Paul, and we call upon you to act in the spirit of his heroic declaration, which we are now considering.

Applying this branch of our subject, therefore, to our own cases, bringing it home to ourselves, the question now is, what are the sacrifices of ease and of comfort, and what the attempts and exertions which all of us in our various spheres ought to make for the honour of Christ's name? It will not do to take refuge under the excuse, " I am not an Apostle;"—the question is, are you a Christian? Are you a disciple of Jesus? If you are, Christ will find you work in every sphere of life. There is no station which any one of you occupies, but in which you may make sacrifices and exertions eminently calculated to promote the honour of Christ's name. As magistrates, ministers, physicians, teachers, merchants, traders, artizans, all in your different spheres, may do something for Christ. Let it be a question then with every conscientious man and woman in this assembly, " What is it that I can sacrifice? what is it that I can suffer? what is it that I can do for the name of the Lord Jesus?"

Need I specify what you can contribute to the furtherance of Christ's honour. Some can give their labour, some their time, some their talents, some their wealth, some their influence, some their example, some their prayers; some may give all of these some two or more of them; and there not one of you but who may at least live and suffer, and pray for the honour of Christ's name. Who, I ask, is so insulated in this world as not to have father or mother, wife, child, brother, sister, friend, neighbour or acquaintance, to whom he may do some good? Who absolutely so busy, as not to have one odd hour, one spare moment to devote to religious purposes? Who so talentless, so mindless, so actionless, as not to be capable of filling some post of usefulness in the Christian Church? He who cannot speak and argue can act, and he who

can do but little even in that way, may at least have it said of him, that "he has done what he could." Who so ignorant as not to know something which, if communicated, might instruct some more ignorant soul? Who so poor, as not to be able at least to show a willingness to help religion forward? While the sun endures, and while the Bible lasts, the poor widow's mite shall stand blazoned on the inspired page in brighter memorial than the richest endowments ever consecrated to the support of religion by titled wealth or ostentatious charity.

But still some of you may object—we have not time, we have not convenience, we have not means, we have not money to engage in this work. We urge in reply, that even though every one of these apologies and excuses were sustained, there is not one of you but must be pushed to the last extremity to get rid of this claim—"that at least you can give the example of holy living, and the benefit of your prayers, for the honour of Christ's name." And in relation to a still greater number, I would press the inquiry, that in order to add to your means and ability of doing good, may nothing be taken from your sleep, nothing from your hours of idleness and amusement, nothing from the cost of your pleasures, nothing from the luxuries of food, and the luxuries of dress, and the luxuries of furniture? Can nothing from one of these be spared to honour Jesus or save a soul? Let conscience, taking its station at the foot of Christ's cross, and instructing itself by the plain uncompromising precepts of God's word, give an answer that will satisfy at the judgment-seat of God.

But, upon what objects, then, perhaps you ask me, are we to lay out all this expenditure of labour, time, talents, wealth, influence, example and prayers? Why, my friends, the ways of doing good are immensely numerous and diversified. You may countenance and support all the varieties of religious institutions; you may contribute to Missionary Societies, or you may lend them your assistance; you may take an interest in Sabbath schools; you may form and support libraries; you may circulate tracts; you may give your attendance at prayer meetings; you may visit the sick; you may read the Scriptures to the aged; you may counsel the young and inexperienced; you may frown on every species of error and crime; you may reprove sin; you may display public spirit by

patronising scientific, literary, and humane institutions; you may do what you can to remove all national, provincial, or local grievances; in short, you may encourage and adopt all Scriptural means for the spread and revival of religion—for the growth of piety and the increase of happiness wherever man has a dwelling round the wide circle of the globe.

Now, my friends, having shown you what you may do for Christ, I insist on your coming to the conviction that it is your duty to do it. Surely you read in your Bibles that you are to be "ready to every good work;" "to be zealous of good works;" "zealously affected in all good things;" "that you are to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;" "that you are to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;" that "you are to run, and strive, and fight in the business of salvation; that you are as it were to take heaven by violence;" and that when you have done all, from a consciousness that you have done too little, you are to acknowledge yourselves "unprofitable servants."

Feeling the force of these the commands of your God, I trust every Christian now hearing me will exclaim with the poet—

*Awake my dormant zeal! for ever flame
With generous ardour for immortal souls;
And may my head, my tongue, my heart, my all,
Spend and be spent in service so divine.*

2d. In the second place, I remark, that Paul was willing to sacrifice earthly friendships for the name of the Lord Jesus. This idea is prominently suggested by these affecting words, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?"

Could the endearments of the tenderest friendship have restrained Paul from the performance of his duty to his Saviour, such a powerful motive was not wanting in his case. He was loved with no common affection by those among whom he laboured in the ministry of the gospel. Our text is one proof of it. These persons entreated and besought him to have a care for his safety and his life, and when they could urge and beseech no more, they employed the sad but powerful eloquence of weeping and of tears. This, however, was not one solitary occurrence. In the preceding chapter, at the conclusion of a narrative, to me more exquisitely pathetic than almost any writing I am acquainted with, we meet with the following account of Paul's parting interview with the Ephesian Church:—"And when he had thus

spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more."

Now, my hearers, we are by no means to suppose that Paul was insensible to these, the melting sympathies of friendship. No! Paul's soul was not of that *iron mould*, that *sterner stuff*, that makes some men think it disgraceful to shed a tear, and unmanly to display any tenderness of feeling. Neither his piety nor his manners were of that austere kind that extorts our veneration, while we are chilled into distant awe by the cold repelling air which is ever thrown around them. The sanctity of Paul's character was of a warmer, kindlier, and more attractive form. He had the secret of winning hearts. He threw his heart and soul into all that he said, and wrote, and acted; and when this is perceived, congenial minds, like all other affinities, cling to each other with mutual ardour and affection. The very language of the text affords illustration of this remark upon the Apostle's character. "What mean ye," said he, "to weep and to break mine heart?" This you will observe is not the language of cold unfeeling rebuke. His own heart was wrung by this proof of their affection. The state of his soul thus described by himself, was an echo to their weeping; and the mental pang was to him the more severe, that a purer and a loftier principle forbade him to yield to their pressing entreaties. His was the bitter agony of giving a denial to weeping friends pleading even for himself.

Here, then, is the nobleness of Paul's present sacrifice. Like all eminent Saints, his character was a well-balanced one. He loved his friends well, but he loved his Saviour better. Earthly friends had their claims which he duly regarded, but the love of Christ was uppermost in his soul. In the very hour, therefore, in which he might be said to enjoy the luxury of loving hearts, he was willing to tear himself from them; and, though it should be to bondage and to death, to go wherever God, and truth, and duty called him.

And now, my hearers, if you are not prepared to show that Paul was in the wrong, we call upon you, in duty, to go and do likewise. Beware lest earthly friendships of any kind wean your hearts from Jesus, and rob him of his due. I would not have you undervalue friendship, for it has been said,

and I believe justly, to double our pleasures and divide our sorrows; but never let it usurp that sovereign place in your hearts which belongs to God and to Christ alone.

Let this caution extend to those friends who are related to us by the ties of blood and affinity. An excessive attachment to these is very apt to cool the ardour of christian zeal. The love of a husband, and the fondness of a father, have often proved serious obstacles to an intrepid avowal and defence of the Gospel. Ah! well does he who has fought in the battle field, know how much the thoughts of home, of wife, and of children, have rushed upon his recollection, palsied his arm, and almost unmanned his heart, when the drum beat to arms, and when the battle's opening roar foreboded to his mind that never should he again see his home and his children. Could the soldier but get rid of these feelings, the bitterness of death would be past; and, fearless of all other consequences, would he rush upon the foe. And what the warrior thus feels the Christian also experiences. He finds that not merely in circumstances of danger, but even in the more ordinary duties of every-day life, the cares of a family, and the attachments which it calls forth, are frequently most unfavourable to piety and religion. Let not, then, these social ties so wind round your heart, so engross your sympathies, as to neglect your duty to your God and your Saviour. Yours may not be the trying lot to live in persecuting times, when it would have become you to arm for christian war, and to die a martyr's death, and when the last farewell of weeping friends and relations might have proved the bitterest drop in the cup of sorrow which you had to drain; but remember that temptations, as dangerous to your spiritual safety, may come from friends and relations, when neither war, intolerance, nor persecution, disturbs the enjoyment of domestic peace. Did not the fruit of the forbidden tree pass through Eve's hands to Adam, even in a state of peaceful, happy innocence? Was not Samson shorn of his strength through a blind love for Delilah, rather than by the might of the Philistine bands? and was it not from the wife of his bosom that Job received the dreadful counsel to curse God and die? Attach then to every object its due importance; and, since God has the first and indisputable claim to your regards, let no earthly affection divide your heart with him. Said Christ, "He that loveth father

or mother more than me, is not worthy of me ; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me."

But, besides these, there are other friendships in the world, which, though not to be coveted, are very apt to decoy us from the path of duty. I refer to the corrupting influence of those persons whose birth, rank, and fortune, place them above us in society, and to whom slavish minds are but too apt to crouch for the paltriest favour—a nod, or a smile. Thus Moses was exposed to the ensnaring blandishments of the court of Pharaoh ; Elijah was tried at the court of Ahab and of Jezebel ; John the Baptist was tried for a time by the sinister friendship of Herod and Herodias ; Paul, by that of Felix and Drusilla ; and our own Knox had to withstand the witching beauty and duplicity of a Scottish Queen.

Your lot and mine, my friends, are not likely to be cast in spheres like these ; but wherever there is rank superior to our own in alliance with vice, and we are brought in contact with it, there the danger is the same in kind, if not in degree. In all such circumstances, let the elevating consciousness of being a Christian—of being born of God, and of having a home in the skies, restrain you from conceding one essential truth, or diverging one line from the track which God's word and your conscience tell you are right.

It was a noble display of female heroism, illustrative of our present subject, made by the daughter of Knox, and the wife of John Welch, in an interview with the pedantic and intolerant James. When she humbly craved permission for her husband, who was far gone with consumption, to return to Scotland for the benefit of his native air, she was rudely and insolently denied it by the ungracious tyrant. At last, however, he told her that if she would persuade her husband to submit to the Bishops and thus favour Episcopacy, he would allow him to return. Mrs. Welch, lifting her apron and holding it towards the King replied in the true spirit of her father, "Please your Majesty, I'd rather *keep* his head there."*

3d. In the third place, I remark that Paul was willing to sacrifice his liberty for the name of the Lord Jesus.

* See M'Crie's Life of Knox.

In the preceding context, we learn that there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus ; and when he was come to Cesarea, he "took Paul's girdle (or sash,) and bound his own hands and feet, and said, thus saith the Holy Ghost, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we had heard these things, both we and they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart ? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus."

I crave your particular attention to this noble declaration as made by Paul. Observe the remarkable circumstances in which it was made, and which characterize it. It was not upon a contingency which might happen or might not happen, that Paul declared his willingness to surrender his liberty. It was not upon the gloomy foreboding of a diseased mind dreading the occurrence of evils which might never take place. It was not a peradventure that Paul was to be made a prisoner. It was as certain as the Holy Ghost could testify it from his infinite knowledge of all events past, present, and future. In every place to which Paul had lately come, the testimony was repeated, that bonds and imprisonment awaited him ; and even now when within little more than one day's journey of Jerusalem, and when solemnly told by language and by symbol that his hands should be manacled, and his feet fettered like a slave ; it was in these circumstances of peculiar solemnity that Paul, taking up the very language of his doom from the mouth of the Holy Ghost, declared his readiness to be bound at Jerusalem for the name of his blessed Master.

Observe here, also what was the history of the man who made this declaration. He was not one who slighted untried hardships. The poet has said,

"He jests at scars who never felt a wound."

Paul was not one of this description. He was not one who acted the braggart in peace, but who had proved a coward in war. He knew well what imprisonment was. He could count the cost of forfeited liberty, for he had already, for the sake of his religion, been frequently a prisoner.

What then? Did Paul slight or undervalue liberty? No!—not for one moment are we to suppose it. His history warrants me to say, that the love of freedom burned as ardently in Paul's bosom as ever it did in that of a Brutus or a Tell. We are to remember this was the man who contended for liberty against all the hirelings of intolerance at the judgment-seat of Felix and of Festus. This was the man who would not abate one jot of his civil rights, when he conceived the assertion of them could be of any possible advantage to himself or to society—who, at Philippi, would not even walk out of his dungeon till the magistrates themselves came and acknowledged that they had wronged him, and besought him to depart. This was the man who, on another occasion, protested against being bound, and against having one stripe laid upon him, because he was a Roman citizen. This was the man, who, when unjustly and brutally struck in the Jewish Sanhedrin, by the command of the High Priest, intrepidly and indignantly replied, “God shall smite thee, thou whited wall; for sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and dost thou command me to be smitten *contrary to the law?*” In short this was the man who, rather than submit to proconsular tyranny and injustice, appealed to Cæsar, and was thus transmitted a prisoner to imperial Rome.

Paul, then, was not one who slighted the freedom which, at this time, he professed himself willing to sacrifice. He appreciated highly its value, and might in other circumstances have bled to defend it. What then is the solution of this enigma? this riddle? The explanation is to be found in the object for which the sacrifice was to be made. It was for the name of the Lord Jesus—it was for the honour of Him, who, in the form of a slave, was led to prison, to judgment, and to crucifixion, that men might be no longer the oppressed thralls of sin, of Satan, and of hell.

I have only further to observe here, that the sacrifice which Paul thus professed himself willing to make, was one which, as you know he actually made. He did not falsify his engagement, or quail before his enemies when his chains were put upon him. The noblest stroke of oratory which, perhaps, he or mortal ever uttered, was when in the presence of Agrippa: with these fetters upon his arms, he exclaimed, “Would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear

me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds!” Through the injustice of Felix, in these bonds he was confined for two years a prisoner at Cesarea; and subsequently, at Rome, for other two years he was chained a prisoner at large, with a soldier to guard him.

Paul well knew that Christ deserved all, and more than all this at his hands, though no advantage should result from it. But to stimulate his willingness to make the sacrifice, he no doubt believed, as the event showed, that great good would flow from his imprisonment and his bonds, whereby an increase of glory would redound to the honoured name of Jesus.

At this stage of our subject, then, we would glance at the benefit which accrued to the religion of Christ, from the imprisonment of Paul.

Through Paul's captivity at Rome, the Gospel was carried at once to the very heart of the Roman Empire, from which, as a radiating centre, it no doubt more readily found its way to distant provinces and colonies. Through the same providential occurrence, the Gospel found access to the very palace of the imperial Cæsars; and though a Nero might still remain a tyrant and a monster, it is highly probable that some influential officers of his household and of the state, were at least favourably impressed towards the Christian faith. At all events, we are certain that the intrepid and magnanimous bearing of Paul under his bonds, tended to the furtherance of the Gospel, and inspired the primitive converts with a courage that made them bold to preach the truth without fear. But to the captivity of Paul, in a more especial manner are we indebted for many of those inspired epistles which bear his name. These were the fruits of his captive hours. When he could no longer, with his living voice, go round the world as a christian herald, calling upon men to come to Jesus and be saved, with the unrestrainable spirit of a faithful and devoted minister, he instructed the Churches by his pen and sent down to us these precious memorials of his inspired wisdom. What a blank would have been in the canon of Scripture had these epistles not been written! By these, though dead, Paul shall still speak to the Churches till time shall be no more. By means of these, we may yet be said to be instructed and counselled, and comforted by Paul, even while now his sainted spirit is with God and with Jesus,

sharing in all the glories and blessed with the felicities of that happier world.

And now, my christian hearers, from the example of Paul, let me urge upon you the duty of being prepared to make a similar sacrifice for Christ, if God in his mysterious providence should ever demand it at your hands. And I urge this as a duty, with the more confidence that these favourable results, arising from captivity and imprisonment, were not peculiar to the case of Paul. Every Bible reader is well aware what benefits flowed to God's Church from Joseph's imprisonment in Egypt; from Esther's exile as a captive maid in Persia; from the confinement of Jeremiah in the dungeon; from Daniel's captivity in Babylon; from Peter's imprisonment at Jerusalem; and from John's banishment to the lonely isle of Patmos. Nor is modern history wanting in illustrations of the happy effects which have flowed from a sacrifice of liberty in the cause of Jesus. For ten months Luher was shut up in the castle of Wartenberg; but there he translated a great part of the New Testament into German—there he wrote his notes on the Evangelists—there he composed many treatises in confutation of his enemies, which were eminently useful to the work of the Reformation, and which, but for his confinement, might never have been produced. It was in a lonely monastery on the banks of the Rhine, that John Huss, the Bohemian Reformer, was kept for many years a doomed prisoner, and where he wrote several useful works for the benefit of the Church. It was in prison that our great Scottish linguist Buchanan wrote his beautiful version of the Psalms of David. It was in prison that the learned Grotius produced his admirable treatise "On the Truth of the Christian Religion." And it was in prison that John Bunyan wrote his well known inimitable allegory which, by translation into foreign tongues, may now be called, not merely a British, but a European Christian Classic. In the jail of Bedford, for twelve years and a half, was this good man a prisoner, and all because he would not refrain from preaching the gospel of Christ. Liberty was offered him on condition that he would not, but with dauntless honesty he still replied, "If you let me out to-day, I shall preach again to-morrow."

To these instances I would only add the highly interesting case of Bernard Palissy. "This person was one of the most extra-

dinary men of his time, and had greatly benefited his country by his improvements in the arts. Although a Protestant, he had, through the royal favour of Charles the Ninth of France, escaped from the massacre of St. Bartholomew. But having soon after been shut up in the Bastile, he was visited in prison by the king, who told him that if he did not comply with the established (popish) religion, he should be *forced*, however unwillingly, to leave him in the hands of his enemies. 'Forced?' replied Palissy, 'this is not to speak like a king: but they who *force* you *cannot force* me. *I can die.*' He never regained his liberty, but ended his life in the Bastile in the ninetieth year of his age."* Oh! that the spirit of men like these would descend upon us. Oh! that the mantle of their zeal, their devotedness, and their courage, might fall upon the Christians of our degenerate age.

We are far from wishing that the trying times of persecution may return, for, under a sense of our weakness, our prayer should ever be, "Lead us not into temptation." But surely, surely to display the zeal of working in peaceful times is as clearly our duty as to show the zeal of suffering in times of persecution. Let a generous shame, therefore, for our poor stinted attainments excite us to renewed ardour in the christian race, and if God is mercifully exempting us from imprisonment, captivity, or exile—if he is blessing us with the sweets of liberty, let the rich blessing only be the more gratefully and diligently improved to the honour of the Giver.

4. In the fourth place, we remark, that Paul was willing to sacrifice his life for the name of the Lord Jesus.

Paul was a man who lived exclusively for Christ. It was the first, last, constant feeling of his soul, "how shall I best promote the honour of my God and Saviour." He knew no end, and sought no end, of existence but this. If the glory of Jesus could best be promoted by living, then, though hardships unutterable should be his lot, he was willing to live, because he could live to the honour of Christ; but if, by dying, he could honour Jesus the more, then to die was he willing, since by dying he could die to the glory of Jesus. Living or dying, Paul's wish was to be the Lord's.

We do not find this opinion on our text merely. His whole life proves it. On

* See Pursuit of Knowledge under Difficulties

a recent occasion we find him saying, " The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." We are not to imagine that Paul was on these occasions surprised by the warmth of his present feelings into a hasty engagement from which afterwards he might wish to re-claim. No ! He was now for a long time habitually ready to run all hazards in the cause of Jesus. He who ere this had been in deaths oft—he who at Lystra had been stoned, drawn out of the city and left as a dead man by his murderous assailants, may surely, without any suspicion of empty boasting, receive credit for an engagement from which he was not likely to flinch. To desert his post, to recant his faith, to flee from duty because danger lay in the path, were assuredly never the actions of the apostle Paul. In this he possessed a common feature of soul with all who have displayed the true spirit of martyrdom in every age. Such was the spirit of an Esther, who, in the cause of humanity, and with the penalty of death, for intrusion into the king's presence, before her eyes, went notwithstanding into the king, exclaiming, " If I perish, I perish!" Such was the spirit of

Nehemiah, who, when threatened with assassination in the performance of duty, and when advised to flee for safety to the temple, undauntedly replied, " Should such a man as I flee? and who is there that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in." Such was the spirit of the three Hebrew captives, who, when a flaming fiery furnace had been heated to seven-fold fury for their destruction, addressed the intolerant tyrant, in these words of cool and matchless heroism, " O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will

deliver us out of thine hand, O king ! But if not, be it known unto thee, O king ! that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Such was the spirit of a Daniel, who, when he knew that the decree was signed, dooming him to a den of lions if he offered up one prayer to God or man for thirty days, yet notwithstanding, with calm resolution, went into his house, as if no such decree had passed, and, with his windows open to Jerusalem, " kneeled upon his knees three times a-day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime."

Paul, we say, shared in the spirit of these men. Having entered the field he kept it ; never laid down his arms—never sought quarter—never, from cowardly feeling, cried 'hold' to the persecutor, but, had he possessed them, would have laid down ten thousand lives for the love he bore to Jesus.

I can imagine that some may allege that there was enthusiasm in all this. I know well, my friends, in common with any student of ecclesiastical history, that as for three hundred years the name of a Christian was death, martyrdom became so common that towards the close of that period a morbid unnatural craving for it seized many christian professors. They courted persecution—they suffered gratuitous torture, and in some cases, died almost without necessity. Ignatius is said to have displayed this questionable ardour for martyrdom. Origen is said to have been so earnest to suffer with his father, when he was a youth of sixteen years of age, that, if his mother had not kept his clothes from him, he would have run to the place where his father suffered, to profess himself a Christian, and to suffer with him. It is related of a poor woman of those times, that, making haste to the place where many Christians were to be burned, she was met by a persecutor who addressed her, " Why make such haste to that place there are many to be burned?" " Ah ! " said she, " that I know, and I am afraid all will be done before I come. I and my child would fain suffer with them."

(To be concluded in our next.)

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LECTURE by the Rev. JAMES MARSHALL, Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. JAMES JEFFREY, Musselburgh.

Price 2d.

THE SACRIFICES WHICH PAUL WAS WILLING TO MAKE IN THE CAUSE OF CHRIST;

A Sermon preached by the Rev. JOHN FRENCH.—Concluded.

Now, while I admit that men have endured the most extreme torments in fanatical adherence to a false creed, and have thus illustrated the maxim, "that it is not the blood, but the cause that makes the martyr;" and while I also know that a strong necessity must be made out, and a proper spirit possessed for dying as a martyr even in a good cause, since some may rush on death, as the warrior at times does, from a greedy lust of fame; yet, after all these admissions are made, I also know that Paul, in common with thousands of those who have bled for Christianity, possessed every qualification as a martyr, without the slightest taint of a spurious enthusiasm. We never read of him inflicting on himself those gloomy penances or unnatural mortifications, practised by Braminiical devotees or melancholy monks. We never read of him attempting to scourge himself into piety, or starve himself into saintship; in him an enlightened sobriety tempered the sternest and most inflexible resolution. We have already shown, he guarded his life, liberty, and civil rights, on all occasions, like one who was accountable not only for their use, but also for their loss. He never unnecessarily threw himself into the hands of his persecuting enemies. He promptly availed himself of every lawful means of defence and escape, and suffered only when suffering could be avoided in no other way than by neglecting his duty, denying his faith, wronging his conscience, and offending his God. Sooner than do

these all the martyr rose in his soul. The sufferings which Paul endured had thus about them all the requisite sterling value of a martyr's knowledge, and a martyr's sincerity. He well understood the religion which he professed. He was able to give to every one that asked him a reason of the hope that was in him, with meekness and fear. He knew well what he believed—for what and for whom he suffered; and, knowing this, there was no sacrifice short of his soul's salvation which, in proper time and place, he was not willing to make in proof of his sincerity. And it was under the influence of this devout and most rational enthusiasm that Paul, on the present occasion, exclaimed, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

You are aware, my friends, that though Paul was thus ready to die at Jerusalem, should his master's honour demand it, it was not for a considerable period that the forfeit of his faith was called for at his hands. During four years, as already stated, he was a prisoner at Cesarea and Rome. Subsequent to this he itinerated the world, as he had done before, preaching the gospel, encountering every extremity of danger, enduring hardships and privations, but still pressing on to the mark for the prize of his high calling. And even after he was fully ripe for heaven, when life to him was loss and death gain unspeakable, even then the

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blesed Paul, with a self-denial never surpassed by any follower of Christ, was willing to have his coronation in glory delayed, if, by continuing on earth, he could save souls and honour Jesus. But at length the period of his martyrdom arrived. When the precise time was, ancient historians are not fully agreed; they are all agreed, however, as to the manner of his death. Being a Roman citizen, he was beheaded at a place called the *Salvian Waters*, about three miles from the city of Rome, and his body was interred in the *Ostium* way. From his second epistle to *Timothy* it appears that he anticipated both the time and the nature of his death. The sayings of dying men have often been repeated. This was Paul's: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

And now, my christian friends, in concluding this discourse, let me urge you to imitate the example of a Paul, in being willing to sacrifice life itself for the name of the Lord Jesus. It is true, you at present enjoy religious liberty and live in peaceful times. You are blessed with the privilege of worshipping God as your consciences dictate, free from the sanguinary penalties of Scotland's Marian days. Here the serpent brood of persecutors have, for the time shunk into their den. The Sharpes, the Lauderdales and the Lords of the Council, who argued so powerfully with boot, thumbscrew, and gibbet, have all passed away. The Scottish Attila, Clavers', has gone to his account, and bloody Bell sleeps in his grave. But remember that eighteen thousand of their martyred victims also sleep in the dust. While their blood cries to heaven for vengeance, it cries also to every friend of Jesus, and of religious liberty, "*Beware! be ye also ready for the hour of danger and of trial.*" Let no friend of freedom, then, desert his post. There is no truce in Satan's heart towards the Church and her liberties; and if there be a tyrannical priest or peer in the land, that man is a tool and emissary of Satan, and has in him the same deathless principle of hostility. In the hand of a merciful providence, public opinion may now be your safeguard, but just because religious liberty is on the advance, just because the

scriptural churches of Christ in this island, instead of existing by mere sufferance, have the present prospect of existing by constitutional right and law, just on that very account hell and its emissaries are so much the more likely to take the alarm, and make some desperate effort to regain the prey taken from them. Judging by the spirit of high-church intolerance breathed by many in our times—judging by the tone of stern defiance assumed, the bitter and rancorous spirit displayed by many of the dominant church party toward those who are asserting merely their rights and claiming nothing but their own—judging by these things, it is not a breach of charity to say, that there are men in our land who clearly indicate that had they but the power, they have unquestionably the will, to light up the smouldering fires of bigotry, and to draw the sword of persecution again from its scabbard.

Let Christians, then, stand to their arms, take good heed of passing events, watch carefully the ebb and flow of public sentiment, guard well their liberties, and come what come may, though it should be to offer up our lives on the altar of Christianity, never, never again to let the souls of Scotchmen be enslaved and misled by priestly tyranny. But remember, my fellow Christians, though the necessity should never arrive, it is your duty to reach the conviction that your life should be at Christ's call and solely at his disposal. "We are to take up our cross and follow him."—"We are to resist unto blood striving against sin."—"We are not to love our lives to the death." Besides, you have other enemies than these with which you have to wage, in this life, an interminable war. Sin, Satan, and the world, are your banded deadly foes: till death close the strife, from this war there is no discharge. Here also there can be no honour in retreat, no safety in flying. "*Forward,*" is the motto of all Christ's soldiers; "*victory or death,*" is the watchword here. Let the Spirit of the Lord then come upon you as it came upon Samson of old. "*Quit you like men and be strong.*" Remember, that in Christ's army every true soldier is a hero, and every hero crowned. Hear your Saviour saying, "*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame and am seated with my Father on his throne.*"

Still, further, let it be remembered for whose sake you suffer. It is for Jesus, who, by the shedding of his blood, has answered

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to God for all your sins—for Jesus, who has plucked you as a brand from hell's burning fire, and blessed you with the hope of heaven's unutterable glory. It is for Jesus, at whose name heaven now rings with hosannas—for Jesus, in whom God the Father supremely delights—for Jesus, before whom cherubim and seraphim bow down and adore—for Jesus, at whose feet the spirits of the redeemed cast all their crowns, while they cry, "Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

But perhaps a sense of your own weakness overwhelms you; then remember that the strength of the Lord of Hosts is ever on your side. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, into which his people run and are safe. His perfections are pledged, that whatever perils and dangers may befall you, at least your soul and salvation shall never be lost. In every hour of need, he commands angelic legionaries to take their station as guards around the fighting Christian. Had you but faith, you might with a keener vision than that given to the prophet's ser-

vant, see these hills, and the wide cope of heaven lined with horses and chariots of fire, all ready to minister to the heirs of salvation.

In fine, remember that your conflict, at the longest, shall be short, and its termination glorious; a few steps more—a few struggles more—a few wrestling prayers and efforts more, and then your sorrows and sufferings shall all be ended; then the rude blasts of life shall all be spent—the thick clouds of trial shall have all passed away, and the eternal sunshine of glory shall settle on your head. Yes, there remains a rest for the people of God. Beyond these skies there is a purer heaven, where God, and Jesus, and holy spirits dwell. There, they who have won the crown of saintship, or of martyrdom, shall wear it. Never shall they be tried by danger or hazard more. Their battles are all fought—their victories are all gained—and the loud shout of salvation to God and to the Lamb, rises in triumphant jubilee for ever and ever. Amen.

THE DUTY OF PRAYER;

A LECTURE DELIVERED ON THE FORENOON OF SUNDAY, 22D SEPT. 1833

By the Rev. JAMES MARSHALL,
Minister of West St. Giles' Church, Edinburgh.

"Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath-day's journey. And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alpheus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."—ACTS i. 12—14.

THERE is no privilege of greater importance for creatures placed in the circumstances in which we are situated than that of enjoying free and favourable access to the God who made us. Upon this God we are entirely dependent—we live and move and have our being with him—we are supported by him from day to day, and from hour to hour. From him cometh down every good and every perfect gift. We are dependent upon him not merely for the blessing of this life, but also of that which is to come. We had exposed ourselves to his displeasure—we had cast soul and body into hell fire for ever, but he is revealed as merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and slow to wrath, able to do exceedingly abundantly

above all that we can either ask from him or think of. Besides this state of dependence in which we are all placed, in reference to God, he has commanded us to pray; he has annexed the most precious and important promises to prayer; he has said that if we ask not, then have we no reason to expect that blessings will be sent to us. And, my friends, in addition to all that we have stated, God is a Being endowed with such perfections, distinguished by such a character, calculated of itself to make intercourse with him yield his creatures the very highest degrees of satisfaction and enjoyment. All this being the case, then, how important are the questions! How are we to pray to God? When are we to pray

to him? What are some of those things for which it is peculiarly important and desirable that we should draw near to him in the exercise of supplication? And to these questions I conceive we are furnished with a very interesting answer, in this portion of Scripture which, to-day, in the ordinary course of lecturing, comes to be considered by us. The Apostles were now in very peculiar circumstances, and we are informed that in these circumstances they engaged with one accord in the exercise of prayer and supplication. In the first place, I observe that these Apostles and early disciples of our Lord had just been visited with what must have been to them a very afflicting dispensation. It is altogether impossible for us to form an adequate idea either of the number or of the strength of those ties by which these disciples must have been knit to their Lord and Master. He was distinguished by every thing that was attractive, by every thing that was calculated to elevate the affections of his disciples to himself. He admitted them to the nearest and the most intimate connexion, often conversed with them, resolved their doubts, relieved them under their perplexities, comforted them amidst their trials; and, as a proof of the kindness and intimacy of the intercourse which subsisted between the Redeemer and them, we read, on one occasion, of one of these disciples leaning upon the bosom of his Master while he sat at meat. Besides, these disciples were now made completely aware of the extent to which they were indebted to Christ. He had, since his resurrection, during the forty days he continued to remain upon the earth, explained to them fully the objects of his death, and the nature and importance of the blessings which, by his blood, he had purchased. And then, too, my friends, these disciples had given up every thing—they had left all, and had followed him, so that he must, indeed and in truth, have been their all; their all, not merely in reference to the life that is to come, but even in reference to the life which now is. How trying to these disciples, then, to have been separated from such a master! We all know something of the pangs of separation from those to whom we are affectionately united; we all know something of those feelings which were manifested by the Ephesians when they sorrowed most of all for the words which said, that they should see his face no more. Even the Redeemer showed himself susceptible of this emotion—

he wept at the grave of Lazarus. But how trying must have been separation from the Redeemer himself! To this trial of the disciples we find Christ adverting, when the question was put to him by the disciples of John, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft but thy disciples fast not?" He said unto them, "Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast." At the time, then, my friends, to which our thoughts are here directed, the disciples were, for the second time, enduring the pangs of separation from their Master and friend. They had been separated from him at his death. Soon after that event we read of his joining two of them, and putting the question, "What manner of communications are these that you have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" Christ, however, rose from the dead—he made his appearance to two of his disciples, and it is very plain, from the question they put to him about his resurrection, that they entertained the expectation that, having now risen from the dead, and again appeared to them, he was to remain permanently among them. "Lord," asked they, "wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" All these expectations, however, were now blasted. Christ had taken his departure from them—a cloud had received him out of their sight; and, whatever might have been their former expectations, the conviction must now have become settled in their minds, that although hitherto they had known Christ after the flesh, yet, that now henceforth they were in this sense to know him no more for ever. In these circumstances, amidst the experience of the pain which separation inflicted, they betook themselves to the exercise of which we here have an account—they betook themselves to prayer; in the exercise of prayer they sought and they found consolation. My brethren, I ask you, have you such a salve for the experience of trials that may befall you. You may have friends—friends to whom you are naturally attached, and separation from whom would inflict a very deep wound indeed upon your souls. You know that it is true respecting these friends as it is regarding yourselves, that their lives are but as a vapour, that appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away—that, though they are now with you, yet, in a very little while, the place that now knows

them shall know them no more for ever. Have you those sources of consolation under such affliction by which the minds of the Apostles were supported? Have you a friend from whom it is impossible you can be separated? Do you know what it is to enjoy intercourse with that friend, and is it the case that if now, in the course of God's providence you were visited with dispensations of such a nature, you would, like the Apostles, readily betake yourselves to prayer, and in prayer find peace and consolation to your souls?

But, in the next place, these disciples had just met with disappointment in reference to their worldly views and expectations. What these worldly views and expectations were I have had occasion very frequently to advert to. The Jews expected that the promised Messiah was to bestow upon them distinguished temporal benefits, was to raise their nation to a station of superiority to all the other kingdoms of the earth. The disciples, from their infancy, had had these views instilled into them; and we all have a tendency to cherish early prejudices and prepossessions in a particular manner, when these are in accordance with the passions of our breasts. This tendency was strictly exhibited in the case of the disciples of our Lord—they clung to these early prejudices—they did so in spite of the Redeemer's warning—they did so even to the hour of his death—they did so even after the hour of his resurrection—they did so down even to the period now under consideration, as is evident from a question I have quoted, as recorded in the sixth verse of this chapter, "When they therefore were come together they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Now, my brethren, these expectations were entirely vain. Christ was taken away from them, and although it was indeed intimated that he should come again, although angels made the annunciation, "Ye men of Galilee why stand ye gazing up to heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you to heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." But this second coming is not to take place until they and many succeeding generations are laid low in the dust. How did they act in these circumstances? Did they exhibit symptoms of chagrin? Did they hesitate about persevering in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ? No, my brethren, they betook themselves

to prayer—with one accord they united together in the exercise of supplication. Let me entreat you in this respect also, to follow their example. Have you a better portion than these? If you have not, then you are in a miserable situation indeed—you are liable every moment to be deprived of your all, of that upon which your happiness is altogether dependent. But if you have, if you have sought and found that good part which cannot be taken from you, then, under adversity, amid the experience of present worldly disappointment, act as Christ's disciples did at the time we are considering. Go to Him who can make even your afflictions blessings to your souls—go to Him who, amid earthly toils, can comfort you with the thought of everlasting peace, with the thought of the possession of that from which neither things present nor things to come, nor life, nor death, nor any other creature, shall ever, at any time, or in any circumstances, be able to separate you.

But, in the third place, the disciples on this occasion were placed in circumstances of very great trial and perplexity. They were so for two reasons. Not only was it the case that they were now deprived of their Lord, their adviser, their friend, that they had no longer the hope of enjoying his Godly presence, of having intercourse with him—not only were their worldly expectations blasted of a temporal kingdom, and of their occupying a distinguished place in that kingdom, but they were taught to look for the experience of difficulty, of persecution, and of ridicule, of hatred, of bonds, of imprisonment, of death. "Behold," says Christ to them, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household." "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." Thus the disciples, in the circumstances in which they were now placed, were led to expect similar treatment from their brethren with which these men had visited there Lord and Master. And, besides this, there had been, on their part, the experience of very considerable difficulty and perplexity in reference to the duties that they were to be called on to discharge. These duties he had particularly adverted to in the eighth verse. "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the

uttermost parts of the earth." This was the work to which these disciples were to be called witnesses of Christ, not only in Judea and in Samaria, but even to the uttermost parts of the earth. This was the work in which they were led to expect that they were to be called upon immediately to act ; and in the expectation of such a work there can be little reason to doubt but that feelings of considerable perplexity would be experienced. There were but few to comfort them. They were men of very low situation—they were illiterate, the greater number of them fishermen of Galilee—they were Galileans, and spoke only the language of that part of the country. How were they qualified then to go to the uttermost parts of the earth to appear before the learned, the great and the wise—to make known the everlasting gospel to the people of different countries, and nations, and languages? But in the midst of such peril and perplexity, what did they do? They prayed—they went to Him who could comfort them ; and they did not repair to him in these circumstances in vain. Here again, I say, go too and do likewise. You are to expect the hatred of the world ; you are to expect that this hatred will, in a great variety of ways, be manifested towards you ; you are led to expect that as perplexity has been the experience of God's people in time past, it may also be your experience ; but then you have this injunction, " Acknowledge me in all thy ways, and I will direct thy paths. Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee." Avail yourselves, then, of this great heavenly mercy, when in time of perplexity—look to the Rock that is higher than you—pour out your hearts before God—explain the difficulties by which you are " beset"—seek assistance—seek consolation—seek it in the way appointed, and rest assured that you shall not seek it in vain.

In the last place, in respect of the circumstances in which these disciples were now situated, I observe to you that a promise had been made to them, and there can be no doubt whatsoever, but that the prayers offered by them upon this occasion, had a very special reference to the promise that had been graciously tendered to them. This promise we find particularly alluded to at the 4th verse of the chapter, " Being assembled together with them, he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me." And

that promise is more particularly explained at the 5th verse, " For John truly baptized with water ; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." This promise had been made to the disciples ; with an especial reference to this promise, they engaged with one accord in prayer and supplication ; and from their conduct in this respect also we may learn a very important lesson. There are many who contend that prayer is altogether useless, because it is quite impossible that it can alter the decrees of the Almighty. There are some who condemn it, and say that since God has appointed every thing—since it is altogether impossible to resist the will of God—since what he has appointed must undoubtedly take place ; then, it is altogether needless to pray, because prayer cannot alter that which has been ordered. How very differently did the Apostles! They were made aware, not merely of God's intentions, of God's decrees, but they had a promise actually made to them—they had the truth of their Lord and Master pledged to the fulfilment of the promise, " ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost ;" yet, in obedience to the command of that Master, they prayed—they engaged with one accord in supplication for the very things which he had declared should be bestowed upon them, acting in this manner, precisely in the spirit of the injunction : " of all these things will I be inquired of by the house of Israel who do it not" ; act you then under the influence of a similar spirit. True it is that no one can resist the will of the Almighty ; most true it is that his purpose shall stand, and also be carried into execution ; but then God works by means—he works through the instrumentality of means resorted to by us. Prayer is one of the means to which he calls upon us to have recourse ; and it would not be more absurd to allow the decrees of the Almighty to prevent our having recourse to any means whatever, than absurd to allow this consideration to deter us for one moment from the exercise of prayer ; and the man will at once be put to silence who makes this his reason for not praying, by being reminded of the many times that he had recourse to the use of means, while at the same time, he was perfectly aware of the unalterable character of Jehovah's plans.

I go on, however, to observe to you, that not only are we led to attend to the circumstances in which these disciples and Apostles now prayed, but also to the spirit and the temper that characterized their supplications,

The question is an interesting one, when are we to pray? what are those things in which prayer is of very peculiar importance? But the interrogation is also very important, how are we to pray: in what way and in what spirit are we to pray? An answer to both questions we shall find, I conceive, in the interesting narrative to which our thoughts are directed. In the first place, then, I observe to you here, that we find a very important injunction addressed by Christ to his disciples a very short time before his leaving the world, with reference to the very time when these disciples had recourse to prayer. This is recorded in the 16th chapter of the gospel of St. John, 22d verse, "And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." When Christ was to explain to them the mysteries of the kingdom of God, he told them that they should ask in his name, and that by asking their joy should be full. From the period when the Redeemer made this declaration, it is very evident that the disciples were not aware of its full import. They did not know the purposes that were to be served by Christ's death; they did not understand the character of that name, which they were then told they ought to use. But now they were aware. Christ had opened to them this; he explained to them the purposes of his death; the efficacy of his atonement; the glory of his righteousness, and therefore, the glory of the plea which they carried before God, when they went to him pleading in the name of Him who had died for them and rose again; and now upon the present occasion, and perhaps it was the very first time, the disciples kneeled together and prayed in the name of Jesus. My dearly beloved friends, we have truths unfolded to us, which the Lord Jesus particu-

larly made known to them. We live no longer under the darkness of the ancient dispensation, when Christ's work was held forth by types and dark shadows; no longer are we spoken to in parables, but we are told plainly of the way of salvation. Oh! then, when we go to the Lord, never, never let us forget the efficacy of the plea we make—never, never let us forget, that the name we mention, is that of Him who sitteth at the right hand of the Father, and has a name given him that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that he is the Lord. And when we call for repentance through the efficacy of the plea, O, let us seek to be stirred up to earnestness and desire, in seeking possession of the benefits which that blessed name entitles and encourages us to seek in time, and which in eternity shall be ours.

But, in the second place, while the disciples, upon the present occasion, went to God in the name of Jesus; while they offered this great and all-sufficient plea, they prayed also in a spirit of obedience; while they prayed, they manifested a determination to conform themselves to the injunctions of Christ—to live as he called upon them to live, to do as he commanded them, to whatever difficulty or trial such obedience might expose them. I had occasion, in last lecture, to call your attention particularly to the injunction Christ laid upon them. He told them to go back, after his ascension, into Jerusalem; not to remain in Galilee; but to go to every place, where, in a peculiar manner, opposition had been manifested to him and his cause. This was a command addressed by Christ to his disciples, which required great faith and much fortitude, to carry into execution. O, my brethren, I beseech you remark this. The very same passage of Scripture which records the prayer of the disciples, records also their obedience to this command of their Master. We read here of their supplication, but notice here what we read of their practice: "They returned unto Jerusalem, from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath-day's journey." Let us be taught by this, the doctrine which sometime ago I endeavoured to press upon you, that if we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not deliver us; that if we expect our prayers to be heard we must not only go to God in the name of Christ, but we must go seeking, and praying, and aspiring after obed-

ience. There are some who never pray at all. There are others whose consciences will not allow them to give up the exercise of prayer; but, then, while they go on in a course of praying, they also go on in a course of sinning; while they are determined not to give up prayer, they are equally determined not to give up iniquity; and there are persons who thus go on in a course of sinning and praying, imagining that their prayers will operate as a kind of atonement for sin. How different the conduct of these disciples! They prayed, but at the same time they persevered in a course of obedience. Do you as they did. Let it be one grand object for which you go to God in prayer, that you may be enabled to repent, that you may have grace given to you, to turn from the evil of your ways and every unrighteous thought—to have sin decrease and holiness more and more abound.

Again, while these disciples thus manifested a spirit of determination to yield to their Lord and Master, they showed also the spirit of love by which they were actuated towards one another, and the spirit of love too, by which they were actuated towards all their fellow-men around them. This is again and again inculcated upon us. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar," says Christ, "and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." And the same Redeemer, in that form of prayer which he taught his disciples to use, has taught us all to say, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us;" thus making the man who yields to the malignant and angry passions of his nature, really and truly to invoke damnation upon himself—the wrath of God—by asking of God to deal with him as he deals with his fellow-creatures around him. Among these disciples we have the manifestation of a spirit of an opposite character, the spirit of love and brotherly-kindness. We do read of their disputes, but we shall read of these no more. In the future account that is recorded here, they are met, and they are met with one accord. "They went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alpheus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication,

with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." And for what did they this? Beyond all question, for the fulfilment of Christ's promise; that promise which was to enable them to bear witness for him "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." In this they showed not only their brotherly love towards each other, but the sentiments of kindness by which they were actuated towards all, by which they were actuated even towards those who were ready to oppose them at Jerusalem. They united in prayer, and their object of prayer was to them a blessing, even to those who were ready to oppose and maltreat them. Let us, my brethren, put away all wrath, and anger, and malice, and evil deeds; let us put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering. Let us be kind, one to another; tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us. And let us go to the throne, not only that the love of God may be enkindled and cherished in our hearts, but the love of our neighbour; and that we may be enabled to exhibit the influence of this in all our doings and dealings with our "fellow-men."

In the last place, these Apostles united together. They waited for a time for the answer. This answer was at length vouchsafed. They joined in one accord—they assembled as a Church to pray; and this teaches us the importance of public worship—the duty of not only singly and secretly entering into our closets and pouring out our hearts to our Father who seeth in secret, but the duty also of assembling ourselves together and presenting before God our united supplications. They waited patiently for the time when God was pleased to answer them. In his time that answer was graciously and most abundantly vouchsafed. "When the day of Pentecost," we are informed at the beginning of the 2d chapter, "was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Let me ask you, in conclusion, and very shortly—

Is there an individual here who has received his existence from God, who is daily fed and clothed by God's bounty, who has received much kindness as we all have at the hands of Jehovah; but who never, never has made an acknowledgment to this God for such benefit? Is there an individual here dependent upon God for the time of his remaining, depending upon him for the very next breath that he is to be enabled to draw; and yet, has never deigned to acknowledge the perfections of his nature, the temporary blessings he stands continually in need of? Is there an individual here exposed to the wrath to come, who knows that he is a sinner, and that as a transgressor he stands exposed to the consequences of his guilt; and yet, has never bowed his knee, or, at least, does not now bow his knee, praying that this most terrible of all evils may be averted from him, that he may be plucked as a brand from the burning, and rescued from the consequences to which he "is exposed?" Is there an individual here who has heard of the blessings of God, the sweets of Jehovah's friendship, the value, the blessedness of Jehovah's presence, the pleasures for evermore that are at his right hand; but who, from day to day, testifies his

contempt for these benefits, by showing that he does not think it worth his while even to look up for them? O! how must that man be regarded by other intelligent beings! Oh! we entreat that man, if there be such a man, no longer to live as if there were not a God at all, and no eternity, and no soul; but truly to bethink himself of what he is, of what God is, of what must by and by take place, if he depart from him; and of what must be the reflections of a soul in that place where there is no hope, no revelation of mercy, no throne of grace; when in that condition of helplessness, there is an exercise of retrospection to the world where the words were again and again enforced, "Ask, and it shall be given; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened." If you do pray, see that it be in the name of Jesus—see that it be for blessings that you pray—see that it be for purity, for deliverance from sin as well as the consequences of sin. These are the **real** blessings. Prayer that has not these for its objects, what can it be but an abomination to the Lord? May God bless what has been said, and to his name be the praise. Amen.

ON HEARING THE WORD;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE RELIEF CHURCH, JOHNSTONE, ON THE MORNING OF
SABBATH THE 22d SEPTEMBER, 1833, ON THE OCCASION OF INTRODUCING THE
REV. GEORGE BROOKS TO THE PASTORAL CHARGE OF THAT CHURCH

By the Rev. JAMES JEFFREY,
Minister of the Relief Church Musselburgh.

"Take heed, therefore, how ye hear."—LUKE viii. 18.

THE exhortation conveyed in these words, though originally addressed to the disciples of the Saviour, is applicable to professing Christians in every age. So powerful is the influence of the world in diverting the attention from the consideration of religion, and so great our inaptitude to be affected by spiritual objects, that we have need frequently to be reminded of the worthlessness of the one, when brought into comparison with the enduring character of the other. Were our minds principally engaged on the question of our salvation, and did we act as if preparation for eternity were in this world our paramount occupation—were our desires ever longing after holiness, and our

hearts ever open to the reception of divine truth—were there, in short, within us no propensity to sin, and no aspirations but such as assumed a heaven-ward direction, then might we with safety be left to our own guidance, and then with some degree of plausibility might the means of grace which have been appointed, be treated as altogether superfluous and absurd. But being naturally disinclined to give a cordial reception to the disclosures of the gospel—living in a world which exercises over us a mighty and controlling power, in which the unseen realities of the future are lost in the absorbing interests of the present, and wherein there is so much to withdraw us

from the contemplation of heaven, and to chain us down to the gratifications of earth, we require constantly to be admonished of that faith, which, as Christians, we should exhibit. Without attending to such an admonition, all our religious observances may be entirely nugatory, to us the possession of a rich spiritual provision may be wholly unproductive; and while, on the return of every Sabbath, we are punctual in our appearances in the house of prayer, the temple may be resorted to without our having any experience of the benefits for which its services were established. The very circumstance that, from infancy we have been taught to venerate the solemnities of the Sabbath, to enjoy its hallowed retirement from the din and bustle of the world, to answer the sounds of its church-bells, summoning us to the worship of the Almighty; the habit thus acquired and strengthened, has, with many, the effect of inducing a spirit of formality; and therefore, to counteract and prevent so fatal an influence, it is necessary that they be frequently reminded of the utter worthlessness of mere outward profession, and that the caution of the text be repeatedly and emphatically pressed upon their notice. With those who openly profane the Sabbath, and habitually desert its solemn assemblies, we at present hold no argument. We have now to do only with those who enter the sanctuary, more from a wish to be esteemed respectable among men, than from the desire of enjoying any fellowship with God. The one class cannot be within the compass of our voice, the other we fear is to be met with in every christian congregation. Forgetting, altogether, that the temple is a place where the God of heaven specially manifests his gracious presence, and that the preaching of the word is an institution of divine appointment, they enter the one, and listen to the other, without any decided reference to the great moral effects they were ordained, and are fitted to accomplish. In the exercises of devotion which are there performed, they feel no personal or peculiar interest. In language of loftiest oratory may the preacher spread out before them the rich provision of the gospel of grace, or, knowing the terrors of the Lord, he may thunder in their hearing the denunciations of a violated and unmitigated law; but such representations, instead of reaching their hearts, or influencing their lives, die away upon their ears like the cadence of a song. Oh!

if this volume contains a message from the Sovereign of the universe to the sinful inhabitants of this district of his empire, such individuals are chargeable with despising the book which is alone fitted to make them wise unto salvation. Assuredly, they require to be admonished that they take heed how they hear.

Nor, when we consider that such an admonition was addressed by the Saviour himself to his immediate disciples, can we think it out of place for his ministers, in every age, to urge it on the attention of even the most pious of their people. If much be incumbent upon us who preach, much also is incumbent on you who hear. If, under the sanction of the most awful penalties, we are bound rightly to divide the word of truth, no less weighty are the obligations under which you lie to take heed how ye hear it. God is his witness—may God be his assistant—that he who this day is to appear before you as your pastor, has faithfully and conscientiously resolved to labour for your souls. The vow is registered in heaven, by which he has publicly bound himself to be instant in season and out of season, in endeavouring to bring you to the knowledge of the truth. But if in spite of his most ardent and unwearied efforts, you sit unimproved under his ministrations—if, from any indifference or inattention on your part, you, Sabbath after Sabbath, enter and retire from this house of prayer, unbaptized and unblessed, he at least shall have delivered his own soul; and if ye die in your sins, your blood be on your own, not on your watchman's, head. To your situation, no less than to his, peculiar duties are attached; and it is in the strong conviction, that the assiduous discharge of these will be at once encouraging to him, and eminently profitable to yourselves, that we now beseech you to suffer the word of exhortation, while we attempt to illustrate and enforce the admonition of the Saviour, "Take heed, therefore, how ye hear."

1. Take heed that ye hear with suitable preparation.

Daily observation verifies the fact, that many of those who frequent the sanctuary derive not that benefit from its services which they are intended and fitted to confer. Such persons so far from being indifferent about religion, or from slighting its ordinances, do, in so many words, admit the excellency of the one and of the other. The Sabbath receives from them the homage

of external respect; and so amiable is their general deportment, and so unimpeachable the whole tenor of their conduct that they, if any one, might be supposed to derive both pleasure and advantage from the preaching of the gospel. That this anticipation is not realized—that they experience no real and satisfactory enjoyment from their weekly appearance in the courts of God's house, and that the most faithful exhibition of the great doctrines and duties of Christianity produces upon them no abiding and salutary impression, is, in most cases we apprehend, to be ascribed to the want of suitable preparation for the duty of hearing. When engaging in any secular enterprise, they leave no means untried by which the great object of their wishes may be secured; with an anxiety proportioned to the value of the expected benefit, they strenuously and incessantly labour to qualify themselves for its attainment; and, instead of resting satisfied with a mere routine of external observances, they strive as earnestly, and persevere as unweariedly, as if failure would be detrimental to their very existence. But, when that day returns, on which they are solemnly called, and which, from its sacred associations, is peculiarly fitted to lift their souls to heaven—when they ascend the high and holy mount of communion with the Eternal, and when they come within the hearing of those truths which have an immediate bearing on their immortal interests—they neither reflect on the nature of the duty in which they professedly engage, nor consider of the preparation which is requisite to engaging in it with propriety and advantage. Instead of entering within the sacred precincts of the temple, impressed with a sense that it is the earthly residence of God, and instead of feeling that the word which is there preached is in truth a message from Him with whom we have all solemnly to do, they enter it as thoughtlessly, and with as little previous consideration, as if it were merely a place, where, for an hour or two, they might see or be seen of one another. In such a frame of mind, and with their thoughts riveted on that world, of whose affairs the Sabbath is a temporary suspension; with their spirits burdened by its cares, and their desires going forth upon its vanities, they can neither be in a condition to receive, nor be qualified to relish the instructions of the preacher. For, between the high and sublime revelations of Scripture and the state of their hearts

there is no sympathy; between their outward circumstances and inward feelings, there is no correspondence; and, therefore, having been at no pains to make a fitting preparation, they continue from week to week hearing the word, without ever experiencing either its enlightening or its sanctifying power. With them, indeed, the Sabbath and its services are regarded more as a cessation from their weekly labour than as institutions, the design and tendency of which are to purify, and spiritualize, and elevate the soul; and without ever giving themselves the smallest concern about anything, except, perhaps, the arrangement of their dress and the decoration of their persons, they fearlessly rush into the presence of the eternal God, and treat with levity the message he has by his servant to communicate. It may be, my friends, that we now address more than one individual to whom these observations are strictly applicable; and oh! how seared must the conscience of that man be, who weekly enters into the sanctuary of God without any forethought of that preparation which the very sacredness of the place demands of him; and how fearfully hardened must be the heart of him who, with carelessness and indifference, habitually waits upon the ministry of the Gospel! Assuredly, they are doing their very utmost to frustrate the grace of God, and are fast verging to that state of obduracy, where that which is indeed an embassy of peace, will prove to them an embassy of deeper condemnation.

To avert, therefore, such a consequence, and that you may reap the many advantages which result from rightly hearing the preaching of the word, take heed that you hear not without suitable preparation. Ere you come up to this, or any other house of prayer, be it your fixed and earnest endeavour to abstract your minds as much as possible from all secular concerns—to withdraw them from those pursuits in which, during the week, they are so exclusively engaged—and to fix them seriously and intensely on those holy services which you are to perform. While your bodies are enjoying a cessation from toil, and your hands rest from their ordinary avocations, let your souls too be freed from every earthly care; and, elevating yourselves above the frivolities of the world, seek to have your spirits touched with that sacredness which should ever inspire the creature when professedly doing homage to the invisible Creator.

Nor, my friends, do we account it a sufficient preparation for hearing the word preached, that you simply divest yourselves of every secular feeling and feel your minds inclined and disposed to seriousness. This is but laying the foundation on which the superstructure must be reared; and he whose preparation extends no farther, may, from year to year, sit under the ministrations of the most godly of pastors, without ever once experiencing either the enlightening or transforming influences of the gospel of reconciliation. It is not enough that a quietness rests upon your dwellings and that the world is excluded from your thoughts; these dwellings must be scenes of profound and simple piety, and these thoughts fixed on spiritual objects. It is not enough that you put away from you the anxiety with which you pursue your daily avocations; that anxiety must be transferred to the question of eternity. Having succeeded in throwing into the shade the objects of every-day pursuit, you will strive to give a prominence and distinctness to objects of faith; and feeling how intimately these are connected with your highest, your undying interests, you will give yourselves up to reflections upon those sublime and mysterious truths which stamp the pages of the Bible with the impress of Divinity; and, from meditation on themes so lofty, and under the impressions which such meditations cannot fail to excite, you will come up to the courts of God's house with minds open to conviction, with hearts susceptible of those emotions which the exhibition of divine truth ought ever to awaken, with desires intensely aspiring after the bread and water of life, and with resolutions that the word of God will be the standard of your faith, and the director of your practice. Nor to all this must you forget to conjoin a habit of earnest and persevering prayer for

the vouchsafement of the divine blessing on the preaching of his word: at all times a fitting and beneficial exercise; it is surely peculiarly so, when about to enter into communion with the Deity, and to listen to the message which in mercy he has communicated. Without his blessing, of what avail will be our utmost and most strenuous efforts? On the periodical return of the Sabbath, we may regularly take our places in the sanctuary; with sustained and undivided attention we may listen to the voice which is weekly lifted in the hearing of the assembled congregation, and with undiminished zeal we may put forth a continued and powerful exertion; but, apart from the blessing of heaven, sanctifying our hearts, all our labour will be in vain, and all our hearing completely unsuccessful. Such a blessing, however, is promised only to those who inquire after, and supplicate for it; and does it not therefore argue the existence of the most hideous depravity in individuals attempting to set aside the arrangements of the Almighty, and refusing to ask him for that blessing which they so much require, and which he is so willing to dispense? Take heed, then, my friends, that you hear not without having previously prepared your hearts by prayer and supplication. Such a duty will solemnize your minds, and predispose you for receiving with meekness the ingrafted word. It will induce that seriousness and solemnity of feeling without which you can never hear, either with pleasure or advantage. It will excite you to the exercise of those graces which are necessary to a profitable attendance on the ministrations of the sanctuary—above all, it will secure for you the aids of that Spirit who is promised to guide believers in the way of all truth, and without whose co-operation and assistance we preach in vain, and you hear in vain.

(To be concluded in our next.)

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SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 9TH NOVEMBER, 1839.

. 85.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN SMYTH, D.D., Glasgow.
ADDRESS by the Rev. ARCHIBALD NISBET, Glasgow.

ON HEARING THE WORD;

A Sermon preached by the Rev. JAMES JEFFREY.—Concluded.

2. TAKE heed that you hear with due attention.

Considering the importance of the disclosures of the Gospel, and the high interests which are involved in their reception, such an admonition, it might be supposed, is altogether superfluous. The very fact that for every man there is an eternity reserved, of happiness or misery, and that the preaching of the word is established as a mean of leading to the one, and delivering from the other, ought to secure for it an attention as earnest and undivided as that with which the criminal listens to the message of his sovereign's clemency. Experience, however, proves all such anticipations to be delusive, and exhibits mankind in a light, but faintly typified by the conduct of him, who, though trembling on the verge of some fearful precipice, is indifferent to the arm which is outstretched for his deliverance. Nor is it merely upon the avowed and unblushing infidel that this inattention is chargeable. He cannot be expected to attend to what he professedly disbelieves. But even among professing Christians the evil prevails to an extent which few would be apt to suppose, or willing to admit; and what apology can those men plead, who, notwithstanding all their avowals of respect for, and attachment to, the oracles of truth, do yet, from Sabbath to Sabbath, listen to their announcement with hearts enslaved by the pleasures, or with minds distracted by the vanities, of the world. Apologies, indeed, they have always at hand, and if questioned how it is that they are so inattentive when in the house of God—at one time locked in slumber, and at another scan-

ning the appearances of their fellow-worshippers—they hesitate not to say that the preacher was dilating on some topic not quite agreeable to their inclinations; or that they were really so fatigued with the business or the amusements of the preceding day, that they could not prevent a listlessness and a languor from stealing over their spirits; or that the sermon either contained nothing which they did not know perfectly before, or that it was not arrayed in the dress of a polished and refined composition. All these excuses, we know, are sometimes put forth with an air of triumph; but though they may satisfy the minds of those who frame them, will they be accepted by God? and on the validity of them will they be freed from the guilt of having heedlessly attended to the preaching of the word? We put it to the honesty, not to speak of the consciences of you all, whether, when sitting in the great congregation, and even when pleased with the arguments or with the eloquence of him who was addressing you, you have never felt your minds wandering away, either among the remembered enjoyments of the past, or the anticipated pleasures of the future? We are confident that we speak the experience of you all, when we say, that even those of you who have laboured most strenuously rightly to listen to the preaching of the word, have sometimes had cause to lament the intrusion of worldly ideas into your minds. Oh! it is sickening to think that man, who is so easily excited by matters of inferior interest, should so frequently be indifferent to the announcement of truths which fill the very angels with wonderment and delight—that he who

can glow with all the lofty emotions of sentimentalism, and feel spell-bound under the fascinations of music, and poetry, and eloquence, should be so seldom roused to attend to the moving representations and the sublime discoveries of the Gospel of God—and that the very men who can peruse with eagerness, or listen with delight, to a tale of sentiment or romance, are inattentive to that book which narrates the mysterious birth, the surprising history, and the matchless character of an incarnate God. Say what they will, or put forth what pretensions they may, such men are not Christians. They have never seen the need, nor felt the value, nor experienced the power of that wisdom which maketh wise unto salvation, and with truth may it be said of them, that seeing they do not perceive, and that hearing they do not understand.

Now, my friends, only consider the criminality of such conduct, and how pernicious it must be to our own spiritual interests. It argues an indifference to, and disrespect for, the authority of God. It is an actual preference of the will of the creature to the written law of the Creator, a virtually saying to the Almighty, that his message of mercy we despise, and that the Gospel which contains it we regard as a fable; and, whatever such men may think of themselves, or however much they may be disposed to boast of the regularity of their attendance at Church, we do honestly believe that their inattention is a practical indication of the want of a sufficient interest in the great business of religion. For if they really felt the value, and were alive to the importance of those truths which form the subject of the christian ministry—if they truly believed how indispensable to their immortal well-being that Gospel is, to the preaching of which their attention is invited, it is inconceivable that they would not listen to it with a close, an anxious, and serious regard. The very consciousness that it is only by it they can ever become acquainted with the method of salvation, would give to it a prominence in their affections, which would lead them to look upon every other object as comparatively insignificant: and if ever, through the ensnaring influences of the world they were betrayed into a momentary inattention, instead of seeking to excuse themselves, they would grieve that ever for a moment they had turned away their thoughts from a subject so essentially connected with their immortal interests. Did we seek to

preach ourselves, instead of Christ Jesus the Lord—were we weekly to address you in words of men's wisdom, and not in the simplicity of the oracles of God—and did it happen that we taught doctrines, and inculcated precepts, unwarranted and unsanctioned by the Book of Inspiration, then would you do well to eye us with suspicion, and turn a deaf ear to every utterance of our voice. “We speak as unto wise men; judge ye what we say.” To the law and to the testimony, as a test, it is right that you should bring our ministrations; but if our preaching be in agreement with the Word of God, and if we urge upon you no doctrine, and inculcate no duty which is not contained in this record of revealed truth, then any inattention on your part is not merely a disparagement of us and of our labours, but a positive act of disrespect to the living and eternal God. Be not hasty in condemning, and think it not strange that you are unbefited by the preaching of any man, so long as you fail to give to it a regular and uniform attention; for your very habits of inattention incapacitate you from feeling as you ought under the ministrations of the sanctuary. Not only may you loose some important hint, or some connecting link in the chain of argument—not only may some forcible illustration pass away unheeded, and some powerful motive or urgent appeal be unnoticed, but your inattention prevents your memory from treasuring up much useful information, and what is thus unremembered can be of no avail in biasing the judgment, or in confirming the faith, or in influencing the conduct. As then you would testify your respect for the word and ordinances of God—as you would manifest that you have been made recipients of the grace of heaven, and that to you the Gospel has brought a peace that passeth all understanding, we beseech you to listen to the preaching of the Word with a sustained and an undivided attention. Let no secular affairs divert your thoughts away from those truths which may be submitted to your notice—let no vain imaginations, and no unholy desires, withdraw your minds from those sacred lessons which are weekly pressed upon your attention, and then will you feel as it was felt by the Psalmist, “that one day spent in the courts of God's house is better than a thousand spent elsewhere.”

3. Take heed that you hear with self-application.

It is oftener than once the subject of prophetic lamentation that many heard the words of God, without ever doing them ; and it is greatly to be feared that a similar complaint might, with justice, be preferred against many professing Christians in the present day. There is, we are aware, a natural repugnance to measure ourselves by any standard which exhibits our own littleness ; and while eagle-eyed in perceiving, and too frequently very eager, in magnifying the deficiencies of others, we are very reluctant to acknowledge the faults which are chargeable against ourselves. But, my friends, it would be well, if, instead of comparing ourselves with ourselves, or even with our fellow-men, we tried our characters by the test of revealed truth, and estimated them in the balance of the sanctuary. And is not this the professed purpose of every man, who regularly waits upon the preaching of the Word ? For what reason is it that so many on every Sabbath-day assemble themselves together, if it is not that their spiritual edification may be promoted ? and if we were now to ask the very occupants of these seats, wherefore it is that they have come up hither, would not the ready reply be, it is that they may learn their characters in the sight of God, and be reminded of their duty in reference to eternity ? Yet, when we look at the every-day conduct of many of the frequenters of the sanctuary ; when we see the profession of the Sabbath belied by the practice of the week, and find among them profanity, and lying, and extortion, and slander, are we not obliged to say of them that their church-going is all empty and unmeaning parade ? for, did they reflect on the individual interest which they have in the truths which are there delivered, and were they serious in applying the principles of religion as criteria by which to judge themselves, they would cease to be the thoughtless and indifferent characters they too often prove themselves to be. Without self-application, the very design and tendency of preaching are forgotten, and the Church is made nothing more than a mere public resort. It is quite a possible thing that we may never find you absent from place of worship—that you may even profess to acknowledge the truth and to appreciate the value of all that is there spoken, and that often times you may go away charmed with the arguments or the illustrations of the speaker ; but of what avail is all this, so long as you have never brought the

truth home to yourselves, and honestly applied it to the purposes of correction and instruction in righteousness ? Whatever, therefore, be the subject brought under review, be careful that you look well to your own improvement. Study to make it bear upon your own characters, in detecting some hidden vice, in exposing some favourite delusion. Continually remember that you have a deep, an abiding interest in every promise we unfold, in every threatening we denounce, in every doctrine we explain, in every duty we enforce ; and, instead of sitting in judgment upon your neighbours, and laying the flattering unction to your souls, that you are better by a great deal than they, weigh yourselves in the balance of the sanctuary, estimate your own characters by the standard of the Gospel, and let every sermon which you hear be instrumental in enlightening your understandings, improving your hearts, and rectifying your conduct.

We are unwilling to conclude these remarks, without earnestly requesting for them, that consideration to which every thing on a theme so sacred, is unquestionably entitled. In order to our realizing the end for which any of the ordinances of the Gospel have been established, it is necessary, not only that these ordinances be regularly observed, but also that our observance of them should proceed from christian motives, and be directed by a christian spirit. It will, for example, avail us little, that we are accustomed daily to peruse the passages of Scripture, unless, with an entire abandonment of every preconceived opinion, we prostrate our minds before the genius of inspiration, and devoutly ask for that spiritual influence, apart from which, we can neither appreciate the value, nor be benefited by the communications, of this blessed book. In the same way we may weekly appear in the courts of God's house—coming as people come, and sitting as God's people sit ; with much apparent solemnity of manner we may engage in all the services which are there performed, and in as far as outward circumstances are concerned, we may exhibit the very model of a devout and conscientious worshipper ; and yet, unless we are actuated by the desire of spiritual improvement and impressed with the sense of our individual responsibility, we will be as little benefited by the ministrations of the sanctuary, as we would by the exhibition of some tasteless theatrical representation. If this be a conclusion which daily

observation justifies and confirms—if the individual is often to be seen, who, although a regular frequenter of the sanctuary, is making no perceptible progress in the great work of an undying sanctification, oh, how solicitous should you be for the right improvement of so inestimable a privilege, and with what earnestness should you take heed how you listen to those positions and enforcements of doctrine and of duty which are delivered from the pulpit! Privilege is ever accompanied with a corresponding weight of obligation. From those to whom much is given, much also will be required; and therefore just in proportion to the fidelity and value of your pastor's ministrations, is the amount of responsibility which is imposed individually upon you. On his part, I feel confident in asserting that he will neither indolently nor weakly discharge the duties of the station to which your suffrages have called him—that he enters upon the performance of the high functions of the christian ministry, with a heart wholly devoted to the service of his Master, and that his time and his talents will be cheerfully and uniformly consecrated to the endeavour of converting the sinner, and of edifying the saint. If a long and intimate acquaintance can enable me to form any estimate of his character, or justify me in offering any recommendation of that character to you, then do I feel warranted in saying, that his personal piety, and his more than ordinary acquirements, are the best guarantee of the ability and faithfulness with which he will discharge the duties of the office with which you beheld him publicly invested. Within himself, he feels that it is no light matter to minister at the altar of eternal truth—to deal faithfully between God and the consciences of sinners; and doubtless, when he reflects upon his own youth and inexperience, and remembers that from him the young will look for counsel, the aged for comfort, and the dying for consolation, he feels nigh ready to sink under the weight of the charge he has undertaken to sustain. But he has come to labour in the midst of

you, not in his own strength, or with any proud reliance upon his own abilities. He confides in the grace of Him who has promised not to send his servants a warfare upon their own charges. To the blessed Saviour he looks as his guide, and comforter, and friend. He knows in whom he has believed—he is not ashamed of the cause of Jesus—he is willing to spend and to be spent, in seeking to bring sinners to the acknowledgment of the truth; and although he this day appears before you, in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling, he remembers that the enterprise on which he has embarked his energies, is one which, while it has engaged the powers of prophets and apostles, and of the Son of God himself, is, in its successful termination, to awaken on earth the rejoicing of a general jubilee, and to enhance the rapture and the triumph of the skies. While, however, my own experience of the difficulties with which, in the outset of his labours, he will be encompassed, urges me to implore for him at once your sympathies and your prayers, I would conclude, by reminding you of the weight of obligation which attaches unto you. Sermons die not with the breath which gives them utterance. The relation between a pastor and people is not finally dissolved at death. The one must meet the other, for better or for worse, at the scene of retribution—he to give an account how he has preached, you to say how you have heard. That meeting may not be distant. That hour of scrutiny and of decision may speedily arrive. The union so recently formed, may ere long be dissolved. Improve its privileges while it is continued; and may the one so preach, and the other so hear, as that both, through the mercy of God, may ultimately become worshippers in that nobler temple, where holiness is perfect and happiness eternal. "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, who is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them who are sanctified." Amen.

SCRIPTURAL RELIGION, THE ONE THING NEEDFUL;

A SERMON PREACHED IN BEHALF OF THE GLASGOW COLONIAL SOCIETY, ON THE EVENING OF SUNDAY, 22d SEPTEMBER, 1833, IN HOPE PARK CHAPEL, EDINBURGH.

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"But one thing is needful."—LUKE x. 42.

ALL who have examined, with any degree of reverent attention, our Saviour's history, must have been often struck with admiration of the attractive and impressive manner in which he conversed with mankind, on subjects of the highest interest. Truly never man spake like this man, was the testimony of those who listened to the gracious words that proceeded from his lips. The incidents of ordinary life, and the objects by which he was surrounded, supplied him with illustrations. He had a word in season for every hearer—an admonition, a warning, or an incentive, exactly suited to the specialities of each case. The lilies of the field, the sun shining in his strength, the wheat whitening unto harvest, the earth beneath and the sky above, the diversified arrangements of Providence, all furnished matter of serious and appropriate instruction. In the house and by the way, attended by his disciples or holding converse with the multitudes who came from every quarter, the Saviour never failed to utter something worthy of their meditation and reflection. On the truth of these remarks, the verses before us, supply us with an impressive commentary. It came to pass that our Lord and his disciples, entered into a certain field—the field of Bethany—and a certain woman named Martha, received him into her house. John's account of this happy family, exhibits a lively picture of domestic affection, of that union of spirit which subsists wherever there are hearts knit together by the tenderness of nature, and heightened by the power of religious sympathy. Our Lord was received with hearty welcome, and he speaks of the distinguished manner of the two sisters to their Lord and Saviour. While Mary sat at the feet of Jesus,—the usual attitude in which disciples received instructions from teachers—Martha, who was cumbered about many things—the original marks out that harassing inquietude of mind, which is hardly separable from a desire to

accomplish its object—lost that self-command, which the presence of Christ ought to have inspired, and said, "Lord, dost thou not care if my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me." Meeting her case with all that union of dignity, fidelity, and compassion, for which he was always so remarkably distinguished, he answered and said, "Martha, Martha"—calling her attention with affectionate earnestness by the repetition of her name—"thou art careful and troubled about many things;" thy mind is much disturbed about matters of very secondary moment, to those which occupy thy sister's regard; "but one thing is needful"—the others may be dispensed with; but there is one concern of transcendent moment to thee and the whole human family—one thing is needful, compared with which, others are as the small dust in the balance, or as nothing and less than nothing and vanity—and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her. That one thing which our Lord declares to be needful, is scriptural religion. By this, I mean a personal interest in the Redeemer, and in all the blessings of his great salvation; and believing with the heart unto righteousness, and habitual pressing forward to the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ. This is the one thing needful. This is the good part which Mary had selected, and which, Jesus promised, would never be taken from her. In this only suitable and enduring portion of the immortal soul, it becomes us to feel supreme concern; and I would, therefore, in dependence on the aid and blessing of God, direct your attention to this momentous topic under various particulars. And the first thing I would remark is, that Scriptural Religion is the one thing needful for the safety of man; secondly, for his usefulness; thirdly, for his comfort and support; and, fourthly, for his present and eternal well-being.

In the first place, scriptural religion is the one thing needful for the safety of man. There is nothing more difficult than to excite due apprehension in the human soul, regarding its perilous condition, as exposed to the divine displeasure because of sin. The very attempt to alarm mankind, regarding their spiritual state, is often considered the ungracious fanaticism of a visionary, or the narrowness of an illiberal mind. We admit that fervid imaginations have often conjured up pictures so coarse and fantastic as to disgust rather than amend, and to awaken in us feelings, altogether at variance with the dignified and solemn representations of the Bible. But such perversions are surely not sufficient to weaken our belief in any of the representations of inspired truth, nor to impair the impressions these ought to produce. Consulting the divine testimony, we see the most fearful attestation of the state of man, without the Redeemer's blood, and the grace of a renewed spirit. Even, with all the perverse ingenuity to which we have recourse, by which to delude ourselves into a dangerous security, there is occasionally produced in the mind, an impression of something overpoweringly awful. The terrors of the Lord are brought before the sinner in every form which can impart to them the vividness of approaching reality. We see them denounced in judgments against individuals. We see the earth suffering—the whole creation suffering and travailing in pain under a sentence of condemnation, pronounced by the Creator and Judge. It might be concluded that these declarations and manifestations would have their due weight, and awaken prayerful inquiry; but there is a spirit of torpid indifference as disastrous as it is extensively prevalent. Messengers, solemn and frequent, are sent, but their voices are drowned in the tumult of unholy passions, of worldly anxieties, and vain pursuits. Varied are the means of spiritual and moral discipline, but how often do they fail of producing salutary ends. Gracious invitations are addressed to us, yet even these fall frequently without effect upon the children of men. It is of importance to recollect that sin is exceeding sinful, hardening the heart and blinding the judgment, and searing the conscience. But for such effects, the absence of concern about the soul would be altogether inexplicable. Mark the striking indifference prevailing in regard to religious matters, when contrasted with vastly infe-

rior objects. What alarm is produced by the prospect of ruined fortunes and abortive speculations! No argument is then needful for solicitude being excited. Is it not perfectly evident that no similar apprehension is awakened by intelligence infinitely more awful, that man, by nature, has forfeited every jot and tittle of the inheritance of God, and, unless restored in time, is lost for eternity? Is it from want of earnestness in announcing these truths—is it from their being faintly apprehended or inadequately considered that they are placed in the distance, regarded as idle mysterious objects, or cloudy specres, that sometimes gather on the dark side of the horizon? This ought not so to be. It is no indication of magnanimity to shrink from impending danger, or to postpone serious investigation concerning it, because the result, if faithfully pursued, would interfere with some of our passions and favourite anticipations. The danger is not the less real or imminent, because men shut their eyes or ears for the present against its approach. Need I enumerate the sources whence peril is to be dreaded? Is not the world, surrounded with temptations, dangerous? Is not the heart, so ready to fall a prey to innumerable temptations, dangerous? Is not the unseen yet active enemy of man dangerous? Yes, and myriads of other things are dangerous, that cannot be enumerated at present. When you look steadily at the number of these, such as irreligious example, intellectual pride, hardness of heart, habits of negligence, carelessness and procrastination in their individual power and combined energy, will it be supposed that there is no danger?—no danger in this world encompassed with enemies, in futurity enveloped in midnight darkness to all who have not laid hold on the hope set before them? That man is not the friend of his fellow-men who surveys these dread realities and would conceal them from their view—would fritter away part of the revealed counsel of God in subservient accommodation to human wishes. If we are faithful we shall exhibit to your view the whole length and breadth of the hazard you run. We must, with tenderness indeed, but at the same time with firmness, declare to you that there is one thing needful for your safety here, and your safety hereafter, that all who are far from God shall perish, that his favour alone is life, that his loving-kindness is better than life. The one thing needful is an exclusive submission of the understanding, the heart, and the affections.

to the Saviour. There must be no dividing of Christ, no averting of the eye of faith from a finished salvation to the flimsy, broken shreds of a repentance and reformation which are altogether inadequate to the cure of a single spiritual disorder. The one thing needful is, that we come to God in his own revealed and appointed way, that we come as sinners ready to perish, sunk in moral debasement, thankfully receiving pardon and acceptance, through the merits of the Lord our righteousness, supplicating from the King Eternal, all needful blessings. We speak of danger because we believe on the sure testimony of God that danger exists, and the more earnestly do we speak that its existence is not sufficiently apprehended. But we speak also of provided safety for all who will give heed to the one thing needful, of complete and everlasting security for every returning penitent who shall, without hesitation and delay, in this his day of salvation, yield himself up unto the Lord, that he may be washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

In the second place, Scriptural Religion is the one thing needful for the usefulness of man. Next to the accomplishment of the great work of our personal salvation is that of being useful to our fellow-creatures. We are sent into this world under the express law that no man liveth unto himself. The methods by which we may be serviceable to our brethren are numerous, and we require to exercise much wisdom and energy and perseverance in their cause. Thus, in promoting the temporal welfare of our brethren,

present themselves to those who are disposed to devise liberal things—and surely their moral and spiritual amelioration is not an object of inferior moment. That benevolence which exerts itself in the relief of bodily wants is deserving of commendation, but that which also views its objects as beings of unutterable felicity or woe, is a benevolence of a far sublimer character. It considers the nature it proposes to benefit, it adapts means suited to its diversified wants. This benevolence provides instruction and consolation for the young and inexperienced, drops the friendly admonition and kind reproof where it perceives any deviation from right principle, endeavours to rouse activity into action, to quicken the dormant spirit by the mighty power of the Spirit of Christ. It confines itself not to home objects, although with these it commences

its operations, and considers them worthy of primary regard. It endeavours to select the best instruments to economize its resources, to act with wisdom and discretion, to seek, in all cases, that God may be glorified, and the greatest amount of good secured. Now, for all this something more is needful than common-place generosity, than any expedient which the ordinary principles of human nature supply. It is well indeed that there are constitutional feelings which lead to much that is amiable in the intercourse of life, which prompt the rich to relieve the distresses of the poor, to seek out the ignorant and numerous other classes of sufferers. But for that usefulness on which we may securely reckon for sustained, persevering, unwearied well-doing, there is one thing needful, and that is the vital power of true religion in the heart. Without this, there may be a partial, evanescent gleam of benevolent feeling, and an occasional exertion made under the influence of its excitement for the relief even of spiritual poverty; but unless we take living fire from the altar of God, having love to him and love to man; unless true benevolence take root, and expand in the heart, there will be no fruit found at last, to the praise and honour of God.

True religion then, we remark, is the one thing needful for your usefulness. It supplies you with powerful motives for exertion, presents models of exertion the most elevated that the mind can contemplate, enables you to surmount discouragements, which would otherwise prove insuperable, teaches you to look for the divine authority as your rule, to divine beneficence as your pattern, and to divine approbation as your rich and immortal reward. For, in all this, spiritual religion is the one thing needful; since, without its guidance, you would experience perplexity and frequent disappointment. And, again, religion is the one thing needful for your usefulness, because, without its influence, your example might prove most hurtful to others, and retard, instead of accelerating, the march of human improvement. Without religion, you will prove as a dead weight on the moral world; in its march towards improvement, your example will be barren and unfruitful, and all your labours of love will be lost. If, therefore, you are desirous to be really useful to the world, while you ought to rectify its disorders, to contribute your mite to the great treasury of general good, and, by instruction, talents, or any

other means, to be of lasting service to mankind, bear in remembrance that for all these things, one thing is needful. This alone will give vigour to your exertions, and carry you through good and evil report, and through many difficulties, to that world where you will enjoy the blessedness of those who have rested from their labours, and whose works do follow them.

In the third place, Scriptural Religion is the one thing needful for the support and comfort of man. Amid the rapid succession of worldly affections and pursuits, the evil day is often put far off, but seasons do arrive, which even infidelity trembles to survey with a steady eye; seasons in which we find, notwithstanding all our attempts to elude them, that conscience is allowed to lift up its voice of alarm. Bodily disease attacks us, while we see others in activity and health; family afflictions come, or a friend or relative is laid on a bed of languishing—it may be of death; we weep at the prospect of his departure, and all nature seems to sadden and wither; while we are in sorrow and distress; our day of prosperity darkens, and a dismal cloud seems to overhang its close. Violence may have seized on our possessions, and we are immersed in poverty, and the man who lived in affluence, is now in indigence, or, it may be, has become a needy dependent on the bounty of others; or the time may have come, when conscience awakens, and the man is unable to escape from guilt committed, or wrath incurred. Behind it is a cheerless waste marked only by ingratitude or transgression, known, it may be, only to the individual himself, and to Him from whom nothing is concealed. What in any of these circumstances will support a depressed spirit? "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Would any of you tell the agonized sufferer, or the bereaved individual, or the man precipitated from opulence to indigence, or the trembling sinner, to forget his miseries? Alas! they cannot be forgotten. The shades of oblivion were a privilege to many a sufferer, but for many a sufferer there is not even the oblivion of the grave. Would you give him lessons of morality, recommend to him submission to the will of Heaven, represent to him the glory of struggling with adverse fortune? all this he understands as well as you, and could give you the same counsel, were you in his situation. Abstract principles, and great general

truths, will not avail the man in this season of his extremity. He wants something that will meet the precise extremity of his case; he wants something that will sustain him, that will minister to him sympathy and succour, brighten his dark hours, and compose his troubled spirit, something that will save him from desponding thoughts and dismal forebodings, and elevate him to holy abodes, and a better country. All human felicity is an unproductive comforter in such cases. All the resources of man are as nothing and vanity. It is then a most illustrious testimony to the value of the one thing needful, that all other things besides are wholly unsatisfying in the time of man's adversity. Scriptural religion tells the afflicted man who has laboured beneath bodily suffering, that there is a world in which there shall be no more sickness, no more pain. It tells the weary and heavy laden to go to Him who was emphatically a man of sorrows, and to whom he may now raise the prayer of faith, and may hope to obtain answers of peace. To the bereaved religion speaks of a God who changeth never, of a Saviour who is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever, of a course of preparatory discipline appointed by infinite love, for the purifying of the soul, and of a heaven to which all who have been in tribulation are welcome, having washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. To the sinner whom the sharp arrows of the Almighty have pierced, and who, like the trembling jailor, cries out, "What must I do to be saved?" the language of Scripture is plain and full of comfort, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief." "And let the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked should turn unto me and live." It is then evident that scriptural religion is the one thing needful to the human being for support and comfort, in those seasons in which support and comfort are specially required. This is the

antidote that reaches to every kind of moral disease. It provides healing for every disorder, and soothing for every wo to which the children of mortality are subject. It is the orphan's shield, the widow's comforter, the stranger's stay. To the poor it opens treasures of wealth—to that spirit bowed down under a load of spiritual anxieties, it gives beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

In the fourth and last place, scriptural religion is the one thing needful for the present and eternal well-being of man. This head has been, in some measure, anticipated under the preceding, but a few additional remarks are necessary. The numerous systems that have been devised for securing to human beings that which will render them happy, prove that all desire enjoyment, and that all are in quest of it. It affects not this general truth, that there is extreme variety in the judgments formed, and in the sources from which it is derived. The man of business seeks to find it in the active pursuits of life, and in the competency that is their common reward. The man of gaiety seeks it in the extension of his flutter of frivolity. A few more glittering drawing-rooms, a few more sights of tinsel and brocade and crowded card tables, a few more scenes to kill that terrible enemy, time, and drown reflection; a few more years for the evaporation of the light and airy spirit, and these children of mortality will acquire, as they think, the chastened sobriety of mind needful for so serious, and, it might be added, so very dull a thing as religion. As it happens, it cannot be expected, according to their creed, but in such stimulants as music to charm with its dulcet sounds; and poetry to elevate our sentiments and combine before our enraptured imaginations visions of the fair and good in the world. So much for the happiness of the gay. There are others again that are men of severe and studious habits, men who would regard, not merely the frivolous, but the ordinary, pursuits of life, as preventing them from dwelling on subjects of lofty and severe meditation, who are, nevertheless, far from God. It is of importance to bear in mind that religion is the only provision which meets the entire constitution of man, which provides not for a part, but for the whole of that intellectual and moral, as well as natural, system of feelings he has received from the Almighty. The means invented for promoting the hap-

piness of the world apart from true religion, will all be severed from our grasp, but this is that better part that shall never be taken away from us. Now, it is happiness in its commencement. In some, it has reached considerable advancement, being happiness arising from the blessedness of sin pardoned, peace imparted, heavenly knowledge communicated, and the joy of immortality begun on earth; happiness flowing directly, purely and eternally, from the fountain of life, from Him at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore. Is it not happiness to be restored to friendship with Almighty God? Is it not happiness to have a heart purified from dead works, that it shall serve the living God? Is it not happiness to have duties accepted, afflictions sanctified, trials soothed, and every pursuit dignified by its connexion with our immortal relations? Is it not happiness to live with God, and for the glory of God, to advance those sublime interests, for the promotion of which the Son of Jehovah descended on the wings of the wind to this world, obeyed and suffered, the just in the room of the unjust? Is it not happiness to be instrumental, as fellow-workers with God, in educating the human soul for all the eternity and all the felicity of heaven? Is it not happiness to live the life of the righteous, now and at last with holy and serene faith, to be enabled to say, "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me." True religion is thus the one thing needful for the happiness of man on earth. But this is merely the commencement of his being, the first ascent of his imperishable nature within the regions of purity, and wisdom, and blessedness. It is when he shall reach the high abodes of the glorified, that his felicity shall be complete, uninterrupted in duration, undecaying in beauty. The endless paradise of heaven shall delight and exalt his nature, and the contemplation of Deity shall form his ennobling privilege. No cares shall there distress him, no cumbersome purchase shall there oppress him, no annoying element shall there disturb these peaceful abodes, in which the Saints shall be clothed with robes of everlasting righteousness. They shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst any more, they shall be led to fountains of living water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. The tabernacle of Jehovah

shall be in the midst of them ; his people they, and He his people's God. In all their happiness, one thing is needful, an interest in the only Saviour, and a growing up unto him in all things. In concluding, then, this discourse, a most momentous question presents itself for the solution of every hearer of the Gospel. Have I accepted the one thing needful ? In order to come to a satisfactory determination of this point, it is necessary that you inquire whether you have been led to perceive your wretched and undone condition by nature, and by wicked works. The foundation of all personal religion is a deep-seated conviction of sin. Without this, all is airy speculation. The individual who feels religion the one thing needful, is the man who has been aroused by the Spirit of God to flee from the wrath to come ; who has seen his guilt and danger ; who has seen his transgression against the righteous law ; who has seen himself an unholly rebel, and, with an entire deep sense of his own unworthiness, has laid hold of Christ Jesus, for wisdom and righteousness, for sanctification and complete redemption. Be not then satisfied with any superficial examination of the subject. The matter is far too urgent to be set aside by any hasty conclusion. It is a matter, the urgency of which ought to be felt by every man who has a head to think and a heart to feel ; and it gives most emphatic urgency to the importance of the one thing needful, that, unless we accept Christ now, there is no redemption for us hereafter. There is an appointed time for man on earth. He fleeth as a shadow and continueth not. His days are as a hand-breadth and a span ; yet, during this brief and fleeting season, he must receive the one thing needful, "for there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Is there then one anxious inquirer, who is desirous, this evening, of having an interest in the great salvation ? Let him now return unto the Lord, and he has the assurance of infallible, and unchangeable truth, that the Lord will receive him graciously, and that the Lord will in no wise cast him out. If we have duly esteemed this one thing needful, to be suitably impressed with the value and preciousness of the great salvation, our con-

cern, though it begin with ourselves, will not terminate there. Religion is diffusive in its character. Where it has set its seat in the heart, one of its features is that of producing benevolent solicitude for the interest of others. It doth good unto all men, but especially to the household of faith. To our brethren, or fellow-countrymen, although removed by land or by sea to distant regions, it tenders the warmest and most sacred affection of the heart, disclaiming all alliance with the selfishness of the world. The spirit of the gospel raises the prayer of faith, and stretches the hand of benevolence towards every accessible region of the earth. That religion is hollow which is not sustained in powerful exertion for the cause of the Redeemer. "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen ?"

I trust you will not consider the Society, on behalf of which I have the honour to address you this evening, as presenting undue claims for your beneficence, should these be urged on grounds which we consider superior to those of many other excellent institutions ; we shall not be charged with invidious disparagement of any christian scheme, because we deem this of pre-eminent importance. In common with others it appeals to christian affections and principles, but the Glasgow, I wish I could say the Scottish, Colonial Society, hesitates not to prefer its claims for support, upon circumstances arising from its peculiar and indissoluble connexion with the Land and Church of our fathers. While it breathes the philanthropy of the gospel to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and repudiates the ignoble bigotry that would confine man's exertion or zeal, within the limits of a particular body, it has chosen for the field of its culture the long neglected regions of British North America. Unless our treasury be replenished, our bowels of compassion must yearn, with unavailable anxiety, for our reduced and afflicted brethren. Are her appeals the less cogent, that they are addressed to your patriotism as Scotchmen, and are put to you as Ministers and members of that establishment in behalf of which we shall ever pray that no weapon formed against her shall be allowed to prosper. The language here of the inspired penman, we would willingly employ,—"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of

my mouth. Shall our expatriated countrymen prize less highly that Church in which they received their earliest lessons of wisdom and holiness, rejoicing when it was said to them, Go ye up into the house of the Lord. "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his temple." We should betray the most cold-hearted insensibility to our beloved Sion, the perpetuity of which we believe connected with all that belongs to our country's welfare, if we were not to call on you to contribute to this Society. Although our Society had been crowned with slender success, the duty of supporting it would have been, notwithstanding, clear and imperative; for the measure of encouragement is not the measure of obligation;—it is, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Many a devoted servant of the Lord has waited long and anxiously, before a single field has been seen whitening unto harvest. Our heavenly Father has afforded, however, in regard to the Colonial Society, the auspicious promise of a return for every labour of love. Ministers are required and welcomed. We have enjoyed the privilege of sending out not a few, within the short period of seven years, men fully qualified by intellectual capacity and christian graces, for their arduous undertaking—men who have been tried and not found wanting—men, through whose instrumentality, the good seed of the Word has been wisely sown. Christian Preachers, Schools, Missionary enterprise, and of late, a considerable Presbytery, recognising the doctrines and ecclesiastical polity of the Church of Scotland suggest some of the results that have followed the Society's operations. Favourable reports are reaching us; the clergy already in the Provinces, have been forming themselves into regularly organized ecclesiastical bodies, and a spirit of Missionary zeal seems to actuate them, and the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, is expected soon

to recognise them as legitimate branches of the parent stock. "God is appearing in his glory to build up Sion, that men may glorify him in the west. The embarkation of not fewer than fourteen Scottish Ministers for the Colonies, in the course of fourteen months, is a new circumstance in the annals of our Church, and, in these days of opposition to her interests, is it not a hopeful sign? Is Scotland's venerable Church to be thrown aside as a rotten branch, at the very time that she is beginning to put forth her blossoms, with a beauty greater, and a flower more fragrant than before?" We say, God speed this undertaking and the Society's zealous endeavours, her fervent prayers, her consistent example—may the blessing of the Spirit attend such exertions. We plead the cause of this Society on principles that God himself will honour. We say unto you, that as men who have hearkened to the gospel yourselves, and have felt the value of the one thing needful, you are called on by every feeling of humanity and religion to give a helping hand to the Glasgow Colonial Society. The measure of the expenditure this year has been £707, 4s. 1d., thereby exceeding the income by £306, 4s. 8d., the debt being nearly £14,00. To meet this debt, the Society must rely on the liberality of the christian people of Scotland. These statements speak for themselves, addressing you with an authority that must come home to the conscience and the heart of every man who believes that the one thing needful for him is the religion of the Bible. Faith without works is dead. The work to which we have invited you, this evening, is that of sending the only means of christian safety—the only means of christian usefulness—the only means of support and comfort—the only means of present and eternal felicity to your indigent brethren, in a distant land, who would not be burdensome upon you, if their necessities did not require it. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doth wondrous things, and blessed be his glorious name for ever and ever. Amen and amen.

A SACRAMENTAL ADDRESS, DELIVERED ON SUNDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER, 1823,

By the Rev. ARCHIBALD NISBET,
Minister of Albion Street Chapel of Ease, Glasgow.

It is an easy thing to profess the Gospel ; it is an easy thing to take the name of Jesus ; it is an easy thing to enlist nominally under his standard ; but to deny self, to mortify sin, and to mortify sin for heaven is not so easy, and hence the former may be done by many, but the latter is undertaken by few. The greater number, and this in our own day, content themselves with saying, Lord, Lord, and yet do not the things which he says ; they can come to church, but they can daily and constantly neglect private and social prayer ; they can listen diligently to the word, but they can, at the same time, conform to a world careless of God, and lying in wickedness ; they can join in any request for pardon of sin and sanctification of heart, which ascends to the throne of God, and yet be as really indifferent, as if they were independent of the one, and stood in no need of the other. Nay more, while they stand in the presence of God, they can allow their thoughts to wander far and wide upon the mountains of vanity, and at the very moment while they are engaged in praising his name, can pollute their service with a mixture of their own imaginations—all showing that they are not created anew, that the love of God hath no place in their heart, and that they are either in the most abject spiritual poverty, or still in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. And who knows but these very men who are named after the name of Christ, instead of departing from iniquity, are still living in the indulgence of some known sin, or the neglect of some important duty ? who knows but they are envious, malicious, and evil speaking ? who knows but they are dishonest when they have it in their power, and grossly wicked when they have the opportunity ? That this is no exaggeration, is confirmed not only by experience, which hath often shown men in their true colours, but by the words of our Lord himself. Being asked by one whose curiosity seems to have been very particular, “ Are there few that be saved ? ” his answer, though not direct, is of a very satisfactory nature : “ Strive to enter in at the strait gate ; for many, I say unto you, will strive to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house hath

risen and shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us ; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye came. Then shall ye begin to say, we have eaten and drank in thy presence,” that is, we have sat down at thy table, and professed thy religion ; thou hast taught in our streets and we have listened to thy word with some degree of delight. Then shall he say, “ I tell you I know you not whence you are ; depart from me ye workers of iniquity.” It is not therefore a freedom from gross vice—it is not a cold respect for the gospel—it is not even a great profession of religion which will stand the test of true Christianity, or receive the approbation of God on the latter day, a day which shall search the hearts and try the reins of many—a day which shall reveal the hidden works of darkness, which shall condemn the ungodly, and bring to light the baseness of the hypocrite and the deceit of the formalist. It may be asked then, who are worthy to be called the disciples of Christ ? They are such as, amid trial, and temptation, and coldness, and corruption, are not conformed to the principles nor the practices of the world. They are such as in deed, and in truth have taken God for their strength and portion, and are determined, in spite of time and all its temptations, to be submissive to all his will—such as have heartily received, and are continually nourished by, the report of the gospel, receiving and abiding by Christ as their prophet to teach them, as their priest to save them, and as their king to deliver them from all their spiritual enemies—such as have seen that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and that, without God in Christ, they must be without hope in the world. They are such as have truly estimated the value of time and the value of eternity, and, convinced of the littleness of the one, and the unspeakable importance of the other, are walking by faith and not by sight—such as, amid the business and bustle of the world, make God in Christ the supreme object of pursuit.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 16TH NOVEMBER, 1833.

No. 86.

SERMON by the Rev. MICHAEL RUSSELL, LL.D., Leith.

SERMON by the Rev. M. WILLIS, A.M., Glasgow.

SERMON by the Rev. DAVID KING, Glasgow.

Price 2*s*

THE GOSPEL, AN UNSPEAKABLE GIFT;

A SERMON PREACHED

By the Rev. MICHAEL RUSSELL, LL.D.,

Minister of the Episcopal Chapel, Leith.

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.—2 Cor. ix. 15.

THIS animated expression of gratitude on the part of St. Paul, naturally leads us to inquire into the nature and value of the gift for which he offers up his thanksgiving; and, secondly, to point out the manner in which our gratitude to God should manifest itself in our character and actions.

I. If we take the words in their widest signification, we shall find that, by the unspeakable gift of God, is meant the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ—a benefaction so great in the eyes of the Apostle, that he could not find words to describe it. In allusion to the same act of divine beneficence, he exclaims in another place, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!” To St. Paul, who witnessed the change which the Gospel was effecting between what he called the dead works of the Jewish law, and the more reasonable service of Christianity, the superior value of the latter as the means of grace, and as a rule of life, would not fail to appear in a very striking light. To see the same people who, but a little before, walked up to the temple with their goats and bullocks, in order to conciliate the favour of their Creator, presenting now the living sacrifice, which consisted in their bodies purified from sin, and in minds animated with gratitude, and sanctified with holiness—to see this was to witness a change the most gratifying imaginable to a man who valued the honour of God and the improvement of human nature. There are many other points of view in

which the Christian Revelation will be estimated by different minds; some will judge of it according to its effects in regard to the interests of eternity, and others according to its tendency to make mankind better and more happy in the world through which they are now passing. To all, if it be estimated justly, it will appear as the pearl of great price which, when duly employed, will increase the riches of knowledge and wisdom beyond all the dreams of philosophy, and all the discoveries of science. But to different minds, I say, it will appear in a different light. To the sinner who is deeply smitten with the sense of his guilt and the consciousness of his unworthiness, the Gospel will appear most precious in that it holds forth the assurance of pardon, and announces upon the authority of its divine Author, that no one who presents himself before God to ask forgiveness, will have his suit rejected. As soon as a man really believes that he has, by his sins, made his Creator his enemy, he ceases to have either peace of mind in his actual circumstances, or any hope for the future. His soul is smitten within him, and the fear of death is continually before his eyes. Life becomes a burden too heavy to bear; and to deliver himself from the pangs of remorse, and from the forebodings of conscience, the sinner is sometimes seen to anticipate the very judgment at which he trembles, and to encounter the full weight of the penalty, the mere imagination of which makes him shudder in his secret thoughts. The despair of pardon suggests the most frightful ideas in the mind

of an awakened sinner ; religion presents to him the picture of an omnipotent sovereign, on the one hand, and of a condemned slave on the other ; he views himself as the victim of a wrath which can neither be resisted nor conciliated ; the doom of almighty vengeance hath been pronounced against him ; eternity unfolds to his darkened spirit all its images of horrors and anguish—a worm that never dies, and a smoke that ascendeth for ever and ever. Such a one labours under the disease of the wounded spirit, of which it is emphatically said that no man can bear it.

If, then, the voice of Christianity shall succeed in gaining the attention of a sinful man, so smitten and depressed ; if it shall prevail upon him to believe that God is gracious and placable, and that he is ever ready to listen to the sighing of a contrite heart, and to the desire of such as are sorrowful ; if it shall secure his credence to the great fact upon which the Gospel rests—that the Almighty Father sent into this lower world a kind and merciful spirit, who delighted to make known the boundless compassion and clemency of the divine nature, and that he led a life of sorrow, and endured a death of pain, in order to insure the exercise of the heavenly mercy, in behalf of the whole human race ; if this voice, breathing the kindly warmth of divine love, shall melt the ice of doubt and fear which has settled round his heart, and bring him back from the death of sin to the life of faith and hope ; if the powerful energy of christian truth shall have stilled the troubled waves of conscience, and dispelled the clouds which settled on the face of heaven, and sent forth the Sun of Righteousness, with all the glory of his beams, to shine upon his spirit, and to chase from it the hideous phantoms of fear and despair ; he will be ready to take up the words of the Apostle, and say, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.” The night of trouble is past, and the morning of joy is come. My soul was vexed within me, and the fear of death had fallen upon me. “Thine arrows stuck fast in me, and thine hand pressed me sore. There was no health in my flesh, because of thy displeasure ; neither was there any rest in my bones, by reason of my sin. I was feeble and sore smitten : my heart panted, my strength failed me, the sight of mine eyes had gone from me. But God hath now delivered my soul from the place of hell ; he hath given me the comfort of his help

again ; he hath become the God of my health, therefore shall my tongue sing of his righteousness. Thou hast opened my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. What reward shall I give unto the Lord for all the benefits that he hath done unto me ? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. He hath delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will now therefore walk before the Lord in the land of the living.” He hath bestowed upon me, an unworthy sinner, the joy of his salvation, “Thanks, therefore, be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”

We know not the anguish of spirit which overwhelms him who believes that his wickedness has really provoked the indignation of the Almighty. The language which, in various parts of the Bible, is put into the mouths of penitents, is unquestionably very strong and expressive, and yet it falls short of the intensity of feeling which an awakened conscience creates in the breast of a sinner. This becomes the most painful and the most alarming of all diseases. It shelters the body, and distracts the soul : and there is in truth no exaggeration in the words of the psalmist, when he says, that “he went mourning all the day long, that his strength failed him, and that the sight of his eyes had gone from him.” The shipwrecked mariner who has found a momentary safety on a rock, from which the rising tide is about to wash him off into eternity, affords but a faint image of the condition of that man against whom the bow of God is continually bent, over whose head the war of heaven never ceases to roll, and before whose eyes destruction has revealed its horrors, and hell hath no covering.

Our ordinary words of penitence, and our expressions of repentance, and our entreaties for pardon, even when we are on our knees before God, are, generally speaking, little more than words of solemn mockery ; we utter them with our lips, but we feel not their import, the heart does not appreciate their meaning. In fact, we are neither penitent nor contrite ; we have no fear of danger, and no sincere impression that we really need the forgiveness which we ask for with our mouths. We do not think that we have given any offence to God, such at least as to call for his marked displeasure ; and, resting on the comfortable assurance that he is not extreme to mark what has been done amiss, we trust, in his clemency, that he will

not deal with us after our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities. We are, therefore, altogether unqualified even to form an idea of the earnestness and intensity with which a real penitent urges his requests before God. His spirit breathes at his mouth : his soul and all that is within him, whether of intellect or of feeling, is stirred up to awaken the mercy of heaven, and to importune the compassion of his Maker. Imagine to yourselves a wretched criminal who has forfeited his life to the laws of his country. Suppose him in the presence of his sovereign, entreating a remission of the dreadful penalty which he has incurred—an ignominious death, and the anticipation of a more fearful sentence at the judgment-seat of the Almighty. We may imagine, and we can barely imagine, the appalling energy with which he would press his petition, and the melting pathos which would inspire his language, whilst praying that his life might be saved. The agony of the immortal spirit, and the convulsive workings of the earthly nature, would give an expression to the eye, and a sound to the voice, which nothing but the changing tide of hope and despair can ever produce on the frame of man. The sound of the archangel's trumpet, summoning the dead to hear their everlasting doom, could hardly be more thrilling to flesh and blood, than the cries of a human being asking for that mercy which he can hardly hope to obtain. Yet what is this compared with that awful perturbation of the spirit which arises from the consciousness of unrepented guilt, and which produces those groans that cannot be uttered? "What will a man give in exchange for his soul?" said our Lord ; "and what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" He knows that the whole world could not purchase the redemption of his immortal spirit ; he knows that no man can redeem the soul of his brother from eternal death ; and therefore when he is made to comprehend the grace of God, as displayed in the redemption of mankind by the ministry, he will take up the words of the Apostle, and pronounce them with all the emphasis of a heartfelt gratitude, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

On this first head of my discourse, we might pass from the forgiveness of sin to other spiritual advantages, which claim our thanksgiving, and mention, in particular, the light and hope which are thrown upon the

eternal state of man, by the revelations of our holy faith. Were the prospects of the human being limited to this life, he would be the most miserable and the most imperfect of all the creatures which God has made ; because he is endowed with sufficient intelligence to value immortality as the most precious gift of heaven, and with sensibility enough to regard the everlasting extinction of life and consciousness, as the greatest evil that could be inflicted upon him. It was therefore a poor expedient of the ancient sceptic for bettering the condition of his mortal brethren, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Man holds a place in the scale of creation too near that of the angels, to drown the thoughts of to-morrow's death in this day's intemperance. A handwriting would appear on the wall amidst his cups ; and the terror lest he should be weighed in the balance of God's justice, and found wanting, would disturb the sweet sounds of the dulcimer and harp, and darken the light of his merriment. The beast of the field, and the ox that feeds in the stall, they only can be happy to the last, and have no sensations in regard to that immortality with which it was never meant they should be blessed. But it is not so with man. He feels that all does not end here. There is a sentiment in him, older than the lessons of the priest, or the conjectures of the philosophers, which tells him that the three-score years and ten of this world are connected with another world, where time has no limits, and where years are not counted. As soon as man has learned to think at all, his thoughts and his wishes overstep that bourne where mortal vision stops, and where all human interests terminate ; and they pass within the veil which the arm of flesh cannot draw aside, and fix upon a glory and a rest which will never end ; where the weary soul shall renew her strength in the presence of her God ; where all hopes will be realized, and all pure desires fulfilled. That life for which our nature sighs, and that immortality upon which our greatness and our happiness are suspended, have been brought to light by the Gospel. The dearest hopes of man have been confirmed, and his doubts have been removed ; and, viewing Christianity in connexion with these advantages, we cannot refrain from adopting the doxology of St. Paul, and saying, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

II. But, as the benefits of Christianity ap-

pear different to different minds, some men will value it more for the tendency which it has to make human society safe and happy, than for its spiritual aids and divine comforts. Such persons estimate our religion very highly, viewed as a mere rule of life and bond of union; and in these respects they cannot value it too highly, for even on this narrow and secular principle, it is an "unspeakable gift," and worthy of our most sincere and hearty thanksgiving.

Christianity surpasses all other religions in this, that it manifests a striking accommodation to the actual circumstances of human nature, and to those institutions upon which the welfare and gradual improvement of mankind are found to have their chief dependence. It addresses us as beings whose faces are turned towards another world, but who have duties to perform and affections to cherish in this. It presents itself to us as the rule of life, not as the sole business and occupation of our earthly existence; assuring us, at the same time, that our conduct here is so closely connected with our hopes hereafter, that none but the good can expect to be happy. It demands not of us, as all false religions do, such a sacrifice of time and exertion, as to compel us either to relinquish the concerns of the earth, or to resign all hopes of heaven; either to shut ourselves up in caves and cells, or to leave undone the great work of salvation. It calls us not away on weary pilgrimages to visit a holy seat, nor to wash away our sins at some sacred fountain; it enjoins us not to have our windows open towards Jerusalem when we pray, nor our faces turned toward the sepulchre of the prophets when we make our requests to God. It claims not the cattle of a thousand hills, nor rivers of oil, nor clouds of frankincense to propitiate the divinity or to sanctify the spirit. It requires only on the part of the worshipper, clean hands and a pure heart; integrity and kindness to man, and sincerity, gratitude, and submission towards God. By the mouth of its heavenly Author, and by the writings of his apostles, we are taught, that man is most acceptable in the eyes of his Maker, when he does the most good to himself and to his family; when he diffuses around him an atmosphere of affection and virtuous love; when he makes the eyes of those that wait upon him brighten with gladness, and the hearts of the young and of the old, which are bound to him, sing for joy. It identifies itself, in

short, with the comfort and improvement of man. It teaches him who is in authority to be merciful and considerate, remembering that he also has a master in heaven to whom he must render account. It requires of him who bears the yoke to be patient, obedient, and faithful, knowing that a full recompence awaiteth him in that blessed place where all earthly distinctions shall cease, and all the apparent inequalities of this life will be explained and rectified. It strengthens all the bonds of the social condition of man, while it makes them light and easy to be borne; investing the exercise of all power with the feeling and responsibility of a religious duty; and rendering submission at once the interest and the pleasure of those who are called to obey.

To the human race Christianity would, therefore, be an unspeakable gift, though its effects were limited to the present life: and there are accordingly many men who value it for its moralizing tendency, for its peaceable and charitable precepts, who profess not to understand its profounder doctrines, nor to attach much consequence to its sublime visions of immortality. They place the standard by which they estimate its worth on the footing of our earthly concerns alone, and maintain that it would be good for us to receive the religion of Christ, though this were the only world in which man is ever to exist. But we assert that the moral precepts of Christianity cannot be separated with any effect from its doctrines of immortality and of future reward and punishment; and there is reason to apprehend that those who profess a veneration for the one without receiving the other, will find upon trial, that they have set their affections on a body without a soul, and have preferred the dead letter to the living spirit. There are philanthropists in the present day, who are disposed to make the attempt; and, both at home and abroad, there are writers who would willingly separate the doctrines of Jesus from the precepts of Jesus, and, whilst they enforce the latter, would throw the former into the shade. These men will not ultimately succeed. Pure Deism is a system much too cold and abstract for the mass of mankind. The feelings must be interested as well as the reason; the things that are unseen and eternal, must be shadowed forth to the mind, to strengthen the motives which respect the things that are seen and are only temporal.

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There are other teachers, chiefly of the clerical order, who fall into error by deviating in the opposite direction. With them the doctrine is every thing; and they would much rather find you believing all that they propound in the shape of principle, than merely practising all that they recommend in the way of precept. But the unspeakable gift of God cannot be divided, or received partially; and those will derive from it the greatest benefit who accept it as Paul did, as containing at once that knowledge and that wisdom which will lead

us into the right path, and make it shine with virtue and holiness, more and more unto the perfect day of everlasting life. Let us, therefore, cherish a deep and lively gratitude to the Almighty Father, for his unspeakable gift; and may he enable us to show forth our thanksgiving, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to his service, and by walking before him in holiness and righteousness all our days through. Now to "God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

THE PRIVILEGES AND EFFICACY OF THE NEW COVENANT:

A SERMON PREACHED IN RENFIELD STREET ORIGINAL BURGHERS' CHURCH
ON SABBATH, THE 22d SEPTEMBER, 1833.

By the Rev. M. WILLIS, A.M.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; (which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord:) but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.—JEREMIAH xxxi. 31—33.

IT is calculated to impress us with a sense of the great value of our present opportunities, and of the weighty account we must one day give of them, to reflect not only that we live under a dispensation of divine grace, but under the best and the last dispensation. Our lot has fallen on the *last days*—the days to which prophecy looked forward as days of more enlarged privilege, and more exalted attainments, in comparison of which the boasted advantages of the Jewish people were but as the dawn of the morning.

To the present dispensation, the Patriarchal and Jewish dispensations were but introductory. The whole typical system was indebted, for any importance and significance which belonged to it, to the gospel to which it all referred, and in itself it had no glory in comparison of the glory that excelleth. Our eyes have seen;—our ears have heard, what prophets, and righteous men, and kings desired to witness, and were not permitted.

The prophets in their brightest visions, rest their eye ultimately on the facts and

events of the New Testament era. They speak indeed in gratulatory terms, even of the periods of returning prosperity to captive Israel—those periods of deliverance which even long before the coming of the Messiah, alternated in their checkered history with the periods of national distress, but they are ever interspersing with the allusions to their national deliverances, the predictions of the great things which in the last ages were to happen to the Church, as composed both of Jews and of Gentiles; and never does the fire of the sacred seers kindle more ardent—never was their harp attuned to more elevated strains, than when they sung of the days we live in, and of the light, and the liberty, and the purity of the Gospel Church.

In this text, the prophet breaks out in rapture when he touches this subject—"Behold, the days come," &c.

It is natural to ask—were the blessings here foretold, unknown to the devout and holy men of Old Testament times? Had the day not already come when such privileges were enjoyed? was not the Spirit of

the Lord in the Church then as well as now? was not the covenant of grace revealed? had not David, and Solomon, and Daniel, and many others, rejoiced in it as all their salvation and all their desire? had not they tasted the sweets of forgiving mercy? was not the law written in their hearts?—Beyond all doubt, the blessings here spoken of by the prophet, had already been enjoyed; and by some even in an illustrious degree. It is evident, he is to be understood, not as speaking of the introduction of the new covenant, but of a happier and fuller dispensation of it—not of these blessings as absolutely peculiar to gospel times, but as *then* to be more abundantly and more freely enjoyed.

The covenant made with ancient Israel at Sinai, is here set in contrast with the covenant of grace, not because it was altogether separate from the covenant of grace. The former had something of grace in it; but it was accompanied with a very impressive *display* of the covenant of works, fitted rather to alarm the fears of the worshipper, than to beget confidence. So far as it was a covenant of temporary peculiarity, made with the Israelitish nation, and with a peculiar reference to the land of Canaan, it might be reckoned as little else than a covenant of works. Its precepts were vastly numerous, and, in many respects, difficult and burdensome. What of *privilege* and of *grace* belonged to it, was veiled in shadows, and rather obscurely intimated than distinctly exhibited. The law did not indeed make void the promise made hundreds of years before; and they who felt the rigour of the Sinai covenant, and yet knew of the great redemption which had been foretold, being enabled by faith to apprehend it according to the divine promises, were not prevented from rejoicing in God, and from serving him with the liberty and cordiality of children. Of that, David and others are happy instances. But with a great proportion, the spirit that prevailed was a spirit of bondage. They “looked not to the end of that which was to be abolished.” The shadows of good things to come, rather to them hid the glories of a future redemption, than enabled them to realize the hope of it. They embraced the shadow, and let go the substance. It was the design of the Sinai institution, by the terrors of the moral law and its burdensome ritual, to shut men up to the Gospel, by convincing them of the hopelessness of a self-righteous perfection.

They were left to find by experience, that that law which they were so prone to confide in, was more than they could keep, and they groaned under it as a burden too heavy to bear. It was the more painfully intolerable, because, not seeing the end of it, they availed not themselves of the strength and grace for obedience which lay hid in the promises made to their fathers. They obeyed in the legal rather than the evangelical spirit; and, as must ever happen to the sinner who takes God in his own hand, whose hopes do not rely on the righteousness and atonement of the only Saviour, who, trusting to his own power, would set himself to work out a title to heaven by his obedience, their obedience was as defective as their comforts and enjoyments were scanty, and their faith partial and indistinct. “Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, did not attain to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.”

In opposition, then, to the comparative darkness and inefficiency of the Old Testament dispensation, the Apostle sets forth the advantage, in point of greater clearness and efficiency, of the new; and in effect, from the circumstances just stated, this is just a contrast of the covenant of works with the covenant of grace. The Gospel, you may observe, is, strictly speaking, nothing but promises. The covenant of grace is not one of which the condition is fulfilled by man, or of which the enjoyment of the benefits is dependent on human merit or power. Sanctification, as well as justification, ranks among the blessings *promised*. The law of works speaketh on this wise, Do, and live. The other promises to work in us what the commandments require. By one, obedience is the price of the blessing; by the other, obedience is a part of the blessing. “This is the covenant made with us in Christ; after those days, saith God, will I make it with the house of Israel, and the house of Judah”—that is, all the churches of true believers, whether Jews or Gentiles—“I will write my law in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

The tendency of the old covenant was to make those who were under it to feel obedience a vexatious and hopeless task. They obeyed the letter, as the *mere* moralist still attempts to do. But, alas, the *letter killeth!* The law gives *no life*. It holds

but no assistance. The legalist never gives the heart to God, and the obedience is without cordiality in the doing, as it is also on the part of him to whom it is done without reward. But, says the God of the new covenant, I will secure a place for my law in their affections. It shall not be in their hands and before their eyes only, but in *their hearts*. And this the apostle Paul beautifully contrasts with its being written before on tables of stone. "Ye are our epistle," says he to the Corinthians, "written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not on tables of stone, but on the fleshly tables of the heart."

The *Gospel* is the means of accomplishing this, since it reveals to us a Mediator and a surety, who has made peace by the blood of his cross; since it reveals God as reconciled in him, to guilty men, not imputing to them their trespasses. That death of atonement by which the enmity on God's part was shown to have passed away, is, when believed on, the very means of slaying the enmity of the sinner's heart. He who believes in this glorious manifestation of the love of God, cannot but love God. And when the Spirit, then, as a spirit of wisdom and of faith, reveals this doctrine in his own blessed light, a way is made, first of all, for the pacification of the conscience, and then, and I may say thereby, for the purification of the heart. The Holy Spirit, honouring the doctrine of Christ, "washes us by the *Word*," communicates a new nature through our faith of the promises, and gives to the high and constraining motives of the *Gospel*, a resistless and yet welcome influence upon the mind. The *Gospel* is, in this respect, the power of God—a means of sanctification more powerful and effectual than what the wisdom of man could ever have contrived.

The law will never effect for itself a lodgment in the heart of guilty and depraved man. It is not by merely meditating on the precepts as abstractly so just and so reasonable; though doubtless a knowledge of the law is indispensable, and in the hand of the Spirit it is subservient to our conversion; it is a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. But it is by seeing God in his glory as a Redeemer as well as a lawgiver—it is by beholding him in the *Gospel* as the God of mercy and love, that we are changed into his image, and become partakers of his nature. The vail is on the mind till then. It is the Spirit that removes

it and gives liberty. Thus, at once, by the word of truth, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, does the God of all grace accomplish the promise in our text: "I will write my law in their hearts."

I will do it, says God—it is his own divine work. He takes it into his own hand: who else can change the heart? And it is not—I will speak to their hearts merely. "That which is spoken, we are accustomed to say, is soon forgotten, but that which is written remains." So, adapting himself to our ideas, he says, not only I will speak, though in truth *his* speaking and his writing are one, but I will *write* it in their hearts.

Shall we wonder that the obedience of the Christian is cordial and affectionate, when *thus* it is produced? Shall we wonder that he who once learns rightly and affectionately to obey God's law continues to obey it, and never can be utterly or permanently seduced from God and from his law? It is the doing of the Lord! The Christian's sanctification has the excellency and the permanency of a divine workmanship. Not till men or devils can erase the writing of the divine hand, can they eradicate from the pious soul the principles of holiness. Indeed, the image of man's Maker, inscribed on the human heart in the original state of innocence, was effaced. But man was then under the former covenant—one which stood on his own constancy, rather than assured his constancy. Behold the excellency of the new covenant! It is a covenant made with Christ. It stands on *his* obedience—his finished obedience; on his constancy—his inviolable constancy. It was made with Christ, *for us*—but not properly *with us*. It is made with us only as it is freely exhibited to us, that we may, by believing in its glorious surety, inherit all its blessings.

Let not the Arminian, then, insult over our doctrine of free grace, as if it gave no security for the interests of morality; as if, by teaching man to consider his salvation

in every respect of God, and the divine forgiveness a blessing freely and irrevocably bestowed, it taught men to live as they list. What security is so good as God's word? Is a better security demanded? But he, who, by his word, assures us of his willingness to pardon, by the word of the same covenant, declares that he will change the heart. Do I believe firmly that God will pardon every man who takes hold of the covenant and receives his mercy? I have the same reason for believing that every

man shall be sanctified who believes in and receives his promised grace.

2. Knowledge of God is promised as another privilege of gospel times—a knowledge which, under a former economy, was far more limited and partial. The Jewish dispensation represented the Church in its nonage. The many ceremonies and signs by which they were instructed, bore upon them the stamp and the reproach of childhood. It is predicted here, that Christians should be taught the will of the Lord in another way, and know it more fully. “They shall no longer teach every man his brother,” is not to be understood as inconsistent with the continuance of pastors and teachers in the Church; for as well might it be interpreted as inconsistent with common education, with parental instruction, with the private admonition of one man by his neighbour. The promise is comparatively meant. So generally should knowledge be diffused, and so clearly should the will of the Lord be understood, that they should be above the need of such childish training as the Old Testament Church was exercised to.

It is not merely in respect of the extent, but the efficacy, of gospel light, that this is to be understood. How different is the knowledge of God which they have who believe the Gospel, from that of those whose knowledge is confined to the precepts and threatenings of the law! How different the knowledge which is imparted by the Holy Spirit, from that which is merely obtained by the natural exercise of the faculties! Many had rested, before, in the knowledge of the law, which they took up by their own wisdom: so does many a natural man still. “No man knoweth the Father, save he to whom the Son reveals him.” It is to Christian believers that that promise, made to Zion, is fulfilled: “all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.” Christians are enabled to understand mysteries which baffle altogether the understandings of other men, and which are unjustly conceived of as if contrary to reason and to sense. “The Spirit searcheth all things; yea, the deep things of God.” Their knowledge of these is accompanied, not only with a persuasion of their truth, but with a sense of their value, a relish of their sweetness, and an experience of their transforming or purifying efficacy. “From the least of them to the greatest,” this is fulfilled to them; in that many a one who is but as

a babe in other kinds of knowledge, is made wise in this highest of all wisdom. How many, who are ignorant of the sciences of the world, know that which a man, with all science, is still blind in being ignorant of! They know God; know him, to believe in him, to trust him, to love him, to serve him! How far higher this than all the attainments of science, than all the acquisitions of the world! “Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.” Jer. ix. 23, 24. And hear an inspired Apostle declare the value of this wisdom: “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” Phil. iii. 8.

Behold here another excellency of the Gospel above the law! Under the dispensation of the law, such an influence of the Spirit was very sparingly given. Under the dispensation of the Gospel, it is abundantly promised. In vain but by the Spirit (and the Spirit is received by the faith of Christ), in vain but by the improvement of the promised grace of the new covenant, shall such a blessed light be expected to enter the mind. The world cannot receive the Spirit: that is, while continuing in unbelief, it knoweth him not; “But *ye* know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” John xiv. 17.

3. Pardon of sin is also exhibited here as a special promise of the new covenant. It is often exhibited as the first privilege of grace: here it is the last that is mentioned. It is, indeed, implied in the general promise going before: “I will be their God.” But it is with peculiar emphasis introduced here; and it is one point in which the condition of the believer is far exalted above that of the self-righteous legalist. Every believer receives a perfect justification through Christ; his person and also his works are accepted for His sake; and that justification being founded on a complete righteousness, he ever abides in this safe and accepted state; the sentence of condemnation, once repeated, can never recur upon him. “By one offering, He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” The frequent repetition of the typical sacrifices was a proof of their imper-

fection. He who is interested in the one offering of Christ, as the Apostle to the Hebrews so comfortably reasons, has his sins for ever covered. Those who cling to the old covenant of works, are very naturally harassed with perpetual fears for their constancy. The Arminian, who trusts in works, very naturally denies *perseverance*. But it is the glory of the new covenant, that it not only secures forgiveness, but a continued and irrevocable forgiveness. "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." It is not meant that God does not notice, or that it is possible for him literally to forget, their sins. It is not meant that their sins, which they may commit after their justification, shall provoke no inflictions of His paternal anger. On the contrary, He has distinctly said even of the children of the covenant, that "he will visit their faults with rods;" but still his loving-kindness he will not take from them. Even the *fatherly* pardon which they still daily need, in addition to their *legal* pardon in justification, is secured to them by his word and covenant. Accordingly, we find, that, in comforting his people as to the ultimate issue of all their afflictions and chastisements, he refers to his covenant and oath, "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Isaiah liv. 9, 10.

I do not enter, in the present sermon, on the most comprehensive promise in our text, which will itself furnish sufficient matter for a separate sermon.

To conclude. While we see that these blessings are all of grace—*promised* blessings—let this at once rebuke presumption, and prevent despondency. Let us not presume that we are in a forgiven state, merely because *God is merciful*. The uncovenanted mercy of God is a poor and deceitful refuge. Many have trusted to it, to their eternal ruin. If pardon and salvation were the right of a sinner, as a matter of course—if the Almighty, by any *necessity*

of *nature*, were obliged to bestow them—why was a covenant made about them? why were promises given? why have these been announced with so much formality to the sons of men? Is not pardon?—is not purity God's peculiar gift, and the peculiar enjoyment of his people? But, then, who are his people? Is any one forbidden to be of them? "The stranger who taketh hold of this covenant," the man, the woman, who receives the free gift by faith, is among the happy number. Of grace these blessings are, and not by works, lest any man should boast.

Of God himself, we have seen, is the application, as well as the device and plan, of salvation. But we must address ourselves nothing the less, to men as rational beings; we must bring the message nigh to them. "Incline your ears and hear," is his word to you. He leads men to be *active* so far in their salvation. He bids you come; he enables you; he will not cast you out. By all the value of the blessings we invite you; by their suitableness to your case, by their freeness. Will you count yourselves excluded, because you are sinners, when the very blessings offered, suppose you are sinners? Is *forgiveness* needful for the perfectly righteous? or a new heart for the perfectly upright?

And now let me commend to you, to every one of you, this way, this only way, of hope. Why will you content yourselves in trusting to a peradventure, in the great concern of salvation, when you may have the *promise* and the *oath* of God, to lean to? The Gospel gives you these securities. Oh! look into its sacred pages; consider the riches which it sets before you; and, as you would have something to trust to, which will avail you in that hour, when nature shall faint, and the world shall retire from you for ever, and friends shall prove miserable comforters, take God at his word—hear, believe, and your souls shall live. He has been willing to give unto the heirs of promise strong consolation, even to those who flee for refuge to the hope set before them. To show us the immutability of his counsel, he has confirmed his word by his oath—"these two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie." Amen.

THE BELIEVERS' REST, WITH CONSIDERATIONS SUGGESTED
BY ITS FUTURITY;

A SERMON PREACHED

By the Rev. DAVID KING,
Minister of Greyfriars' Church, Glasgow.

“For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you.”—DEUT. xii. 9.

THIS forms part of an appeal addressed to the Israelites in the wilderness, by their lawgiver, Moses. He was now about to go the way of all the earth. Long had he led this people, and through many scenes. As the instrument of God, he had commenced their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, had wrought in their behalf great signs and wonders before Pharaoh and his servants, had conducted them on dry ground through the midst of the Red sea, and superintended all their wanderings in the great desert of Arabia. Whatever affected their welfare, whether it respected their journeyings, or differences, or religion, had engaged his most earnest solicitude and unwearyed activity. But his useful life was now drawing to an end. Here we have one of his closing addresses to the people of his charge, and the whole strain of the discourse announces, that he would soon be withdrawn from their sight and society. How interesting the parting words of such great, good men! Next to one coming from the dead, surely such an one going to the dead demands our considerate attention. The dying expostulations of Moses are particularly affecting on this account, that he had eagerly desired and entreated that he might enter the good land and was not permitted. Having brought the people through their greatest labours, he wished to bring them into their rest. Having shared in their woes, he wished to partake of their joys. Now, the denial of this request would have produced, in a mind less pious than that of Moses, dissatisfaction with God; but, instead of this discontent, we see in all the address before us, the most entire submission to the divine will, and not only so, but the warmest zeal for the divine glory. It would also have fretted a man less godly than Moses, to have looked on his successor, a supplanter, who was no relative—who was to reap the fruits of what he had sown—who was to wear his honours with additional

glory, and yet diminished toil. But these unworthy feelings found no place in the heart of this leader; on the contrary, he employed the last exertion of his influence to secure the influence of Joshua, and to gain respect for the voice of the son of Nun, when his own voice should be silenced in the dust. Just hear how he addressed him:—“And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong, and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.” Deut. xxxi. 7, 8. In short, it would have greatly lessened the concern of some leaders for their people, that another was henceforth to lead them. It has been observed of certain Monarchs, of Charles V, for example, in former times, and of Napoleon, in later times, that they had great interest in their kingdoms, as governed by themselves, but little or none as governed by their successors. But it was far otherwise with Moses. As Peter said, “I will endeavour, that you may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance,” so this great lawgiver endeavoured to secure a remembrance of those things which it was most important to recollect, when he himself should be no longer present to urge them. He followed the Israelites in his exhortations and warnings to that Canaan to which he was not allowed to follow them in person, and set before them the duties, and dangers, and privileges of their future possession, with as much vividness as if he had fully expected, personally to share them. At this very time he is expatiating on the happy country from which the divine will had excluded him, and having occasion to notice some respects in which their situation would differ then,

from what it was now, he introduces this explanation, " For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the Lord your God giveth you." I do not reckon any apology necessary for applying these words spiritually, because Scripture has made this application of them already. The temporal rest of the Israelites is represented in several portions of Scripture, and especially in the 4th chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, as an emblem of that heavenly rest which awaits all genuine believers. Now, my friends, though our text has long ceased to hold true in its original acceptation, many ages having elapsed since the Jews obtained, yea, since they forfeited the possession of Judea, yet, as applied figuratively, and interpreted of the spiritual seed of Abraham, the words may still be addressed to you with unabated force. Yes, you may have commenced the christian course—perhaps you have long walked in it; but even to the most advanced in the divine life, we can still say, " Ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you." In discoursing from these words I shall direct attention,

I. To that rest which awaits believers; and,

II. To some considerations suggested by the fact, that they are not as yet come to it.

We are first, then, to speak of that rest which awaits believers; and here I would remark,

1st, That it is a promised rest.

2d, That it is a complete rest.

3d, That it is a rest in the possession of an inheritance, and,

4th, That it is an eternal rest.

1st, The rest which awaits believers is promised to them. Moses often mentioned to the Jews concerning their rest, that the Lord had sworn unto their fathers to give it them. And the inspired writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, says, " Let us fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into this rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." All men look forward to repose; even those who delight in action are greatly supported under their labours, by the anticipation of after quiet. The mariner who conducts his bark amid the billows, and joys to mark its progress through winds, and waves, and tides, yet derives vigour to handle his tackling from the prospect of a secure haven and a welcome home. The

soldier who carries his arms, from pure love of his profession, and advances voluntarily to the field of battle and of death, is yet strengthened in all his present hardships and dangers, by fancying himself, at last, in the bosom of a family, whose hearts shall throb, and whose eyes shall glisten, at the story of his victories. The adventurer, whose ambition withdraws him from his country, yet softens the bitterness of his departure by the hope of his return; and when his vessel, clearing the coast, stands out for the ocean, and the last visible peak of his native land is decaying from his view, he soothes the rising pang and stems the flowing tear, by promising to that clime of his birth, all the years of his leisure, and all the benefit of his labours. Thus, all men live and toil in the expectation of rest, but it is only the saint that can give a solid reason for this hope that is in him. He alone can plead for his confidence, the promise of the living God. Others may *promise themselves* coming ease, but they have no security that this self-congratulation shall not turn out self-delusion. Accordingly, these hopes of human origin are frequently disappointed. Though the mariner expect the haven, he does not always reach it. Often a tempest, too great to be resisted, gathers upon his bark. At last the storm abates and sunshine returns, and calmness returns, and beauty returns—all these return, but not the mariner, for caverns many a fathom deep have furnished him a tomb. That peace also for which the soldier looks, does not always come to him. After the eyes of his anxious relatives have failed through long looking for his arrival, after they have eagerly listened to every sound that might betoken his approach, often, alas! is their watching succeeded by weeping, when the same herald that brings tidings of victory, brings also tidings of bereavement. And need I tell you, that, times without number, when the adventurer has spent his strength in the successful acquisition of gain and is just about to step into ease, that the call of God comes and he steps into his grave? Yes, God destroys these hopes of man, but he will not destroy hopes of his own making. He hath explicitly assured us, that there remaineth a rest for the people of God, and whosoever shall build his expectation on this assurance, shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end. In this respect, the Canaan above is even more sure

than was the Canaan beneath; for though God swore unto the Jews to give them Palestine, yet he did not secure it to any particular generation of them. Accordingly, we are told of Abraham and his immediate descendants—"these all died in faith, not having received the promises." We find Moses also, in this book, declaring that God had said unto him, "Thou shalt not go over this Jordan;" whereas, the heavenly rest is promised to every generation of the faithful, and to every individual of them. Hence, though Abraham received not the earthly inheritance, yet, he did receive the celestial kingdom, for it was heaven to Lazarus to be in his bosom; and Moses, though he might not cross a Jordan of water, did safely cross the Jordan of death, and hath obtained that recompence unto which he showed greater respect than to all the treasures of Egypt; for he appeared on the mount of transfiguration with Elias and the Lord, and now he stands before the Lamb, on the mount of the heavenly Zion, tuning his glorious harp to the praises of that death which Jesus accomplished at Jerusalem. Yes, believer, it is the saying of a friend who will not, cannot lie, "I go to prepare a place for you." The greatest wisdom of man may be turned to foolishness—armies reckoned invincible may be routed and slain—but though heaven and earth should pass away, one word of this saying cannot pass away: "If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise."

2d, The rest which awaits believers is a complete rest.

The Israelites, on their entrance into Canaan, rested from many evils. They rested from the Egyptian bondage, as God said, "I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites." They were relieved likewise from their wanderings in the desert, and from their wars with the idolaters. But still, their repose came short of that which believers receive, in that it did not afford relief from all miseries. After the original inhabitants were exterminated, sin and death remained, and they found to their bitter experience, that no portion of this world is exempted from the curse. In hea-

ven, however, God shall wipe away all tears from the eyes. Spiritual and temporal evils shall be alike excluded from the regions of the blessed. You cannot name a single malady from which the better Paradise does not secure deliverance. Is your constitution broken and wasted by disease? Look for rest in heaven, for there the inhabitants no more say—I am sick. Does sin oppress you as a body of death? There is no such oppression in heaven, for there they stand without fault before the throne of God. Is your mind racked by many doubts and fears? Heaven gives rest from these, for there they enjoy the quietness of assurance for ever. We do not as yet know the blessedness of such repose by possessing it, but we may form some conception of its value by the sorrows of wanting it. For do not wars without, and fightings within, excite us to exclaim, oh, that must be a blessed land in which this conflict is over, and all rest from all their labours! The heavenly rest, however, is complete not only in giving relief from all miseries, but in giving absolute deliverance from them. Even such emancipation as the Jews did obtain was imperfect. Besides, not resting from all evils, they did not rest completely from any evils. They escaped the Egyptian bondage, yet not wholly from bondage, for they continued under a ceremonial yoke which they were not able to bear. They ceased from their desert-wanderings, yet not entirely from journeying, for three times a-year did they go up to Jerusalem. They rested from their wars with the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites; but after all, temporal war oft pursued them to their very gates and into their very houses, while the enemy of souls fought continually in their hearts. In heaven, however, the rest shall be as absolute as universal. While they rest from all evils, they shall rest entirely from them. There shall be no weakness from the recent fever, no wounds from the accomplished warfare, no bruises from the broken fetters. Not a trace shall remain of all the furrows of sorrow. No, believer, but unbounded and unblestened shall that rest be which the Lord your God giveth you.

(To be concluded in our next.)

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THE BELIEVERS' REST, WITH CONSIDERATIONS SUGGESTED
BY ITS FUTURITY;

A Sermon preached by the Rev. DAVID KING.—Concluded.

3d, I OBSERVE, that the rest which awaits believers is a rest in the possession of an inheritance.

So was the rest of the Israelites in some measure. For they were coming to a rest and to *an inheritance*. Yet, looking more closely, and speaking more strictly, even this inheritance occasioned them trouble. For with tilling, and sowing, and reaping, and defending, it was still in the sweat of their faces that they did eat bread, till they returned to the ground. And thus, every species of property and influence in this world brings disquietude to the owner. Care is associated with riches, for it is ill getting, ill keeping them. Power also cannot be exerted without opposition, and opposition cannot be encountered without anxiety. And so to obtain rest in this world, you must lay aside whatever earthly enjoyments are worthy of being possessed. Even the labourer, when he takes rest in sleep, procures it at great expense, for if, during night, he be not working, neither is he winning. Throughout those hours in which deep sleep falleth upon him, he is adding nothing to his substance, or his knowledge, or to any benefits accompanying his toil. Mark then the glorious peculiarity of the heavenly rest. It requires no such surrender; it demands of the saints in light no sacrifice whatever, but, on the contrary, is enjoyed in the possession of all things. To find repose there, they need not to part with their kingly power or godlike treasures, no, nor even with activity itself. While they rest *from earthly labours*, they rest in heavenly exercises. Whether they behold the Redeemer's glory, or listen to his discourse, or extol his praises, or bear his commission to some distant portion of the universe,

their rest during all these varied enjoyments remains unsullied. You may have seen some birds, as they sported in the aerial heavens on a summer day, resting yet moving on their extended wings, as if they floated through space without care or effort to themselves. And such is a feeble emblem of that perfect facility and unruffled composure, with which the just made perfect perform the most exalted services of the heavenly sanctuary. In all things their rest and their inheritance accompany each other.

4th, The rest which awaits believers is an eternal rest.

God declared to Abraham, concerning the earthly Canaan, "To thee will I give it and to thy seed for ever." But it is quite manifest that, though the possession was transmitted to succeeding generations, yet every successive race enjoyed it for a very brief period; during the present life only, which is even as a vapour that appeareth for a little, and then vanisheth away. And even to Abraham's posterity, collectively, it was to prove everlasting in a very limited sense, as the dispersion of the Jews at this day lamentably attests. The heavenly rest, however, shall be to all believers, and in the highest sense, never-ending. Their life is bound up in Christ's eternal life, and because he lives, they shall live also. Now this eternity of duration distinguishes the saints' rest, not only from that of the Jews in their earthly Canaan, but from all other rests together. The rest of the labourer is sweet yes, very sweet, but oh, it is very short! Scarce have his wearied bones recovered strength, when the night is gone, and the dawning day summons him from his slumbers to resume his toil. If you point me to a longer period, and remind me of the rest of the

retired adventurer, still I would say, supposing him to reach this period, he will soon reach those days also, in which he shall say, I have no pleasure in them, and these years which are not rest, but only labour and sorrow. In fact, earthly rest, if it be long indulged, ceases from that very circumstance to be rest. Repose, when over-prolonged, produces satiety, and ennui, and restlessness; so that the retired merchant often wishes to resume his merchandise, and the returned soldier to renew his warfare. But these features of decay belong not to the heavenly rest. It shall never become less glorious in itself, nor less interesting to its possessors. What is it like, and whereunto shall I liken it? Survey the starry hosts, at the still hour of midnight, as they come forth arrayed in their garments of light. How far is their purity beyond the pollutions of this world, and their light beyond its darkness! How serenely, how securely, how gloriously they shine! and such is the serenity, such the security, such the glory, of that rest which remains for the people of God. Nay, the image is defective; for destruction shall reach even that exalted canopy, and quench in darkness these glorious orbs; but still shall the just shine as the brightness of that firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as these stars for ever and ever.

But I must now proceed to the other head of method, and attend,

II. To some considerations suggested by the fact, that we are not yet come to our rest. And this fact requires us,

1st, To endure hardships,

2d, To prize comforts,

3d, To avoid present resting; and,

To be seeking the rest that is to come:

First, then, the fact that we are not yet come to our rest, requires us to endure hardships.

The Israelites had now surmounted their greatest difficulties. They had come from under the Egyptian yoke, which was their first and greatest movement toward rest, and they had subsequently undergone much suffering and privation in their journeying to Palestine. After all this, however, additional barriers remained to be overcome. Their wandering was not yet closed—Jordan was not yet crossed—the hostile inhabitants were not yet subdued. And just so, believers, ye have concluded the chief stage of your journeying; in that ye have relin-

the service of Satan, and entered

followed up this movement by many succeeding advances to the heavenly Zion. But, after all, part of the way is yet to be trod, the Jordan of death has yet to be crossed, the enemies that environ it have yet to be overcome. In these circumstances, how foolish were it to expect no vexation. When fiery trial comes upon us, we are apt to stare and wonder, as if some strange thing had happened to us; whereas nothing can be less strange in our present situation. What can we expect but inconvenience in a desert; what can we look for but darts from an enemy? A desert would, in fact, be no desert, if it had not fearful wilds and sterile wastes, ravenous beasts and doleful creatures; and an enemy would be no enemy, if he did not hate our good, and seek our hurt, and obstruct our march. Endure hardships, then, as good soldiers of Christ Jesus; be anticipating trials as matters of course. If ye be looking for bliss, then tribulation will come, not only with its own pain, but with all the pangs of blasted hopes; whereas difficulties that are fully expected, are half destroyed, for this very expectation divests them at least of the sting of disappointment. Let expectation, however, not only disarm sorrows, but let it arm you, by inducing you to prepare for them. Come calamity at what time, and in what form it may, let it find you neither surprised nor defenceless, but both expectant and prepared, both waiting and warlike; and should your way appear at any time impeded even to obstruction, and the heavens above you become dark even to blackness, and your heart within you become fearful even to fainting, and you be ready to sink under the judgments of Providence, then dispel your doubts, and reanimate your courage, by asking yourselves this question, What can I expect but such things now, for I am not yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which the Lord my God giveth me?

The fact that we are not yet come to our rest requires of us,

2d, To prize present comforts.

Considering that we are in a desert, it is astonishing that we have any measure of comfort at all. And yet, blessed be God, our mercies are inestimable and innumerable. Look now, I pray you, from one end of history to the other, and tell me of any other soldiers whose wants have been so well supplied, whose lives have been so well supported, whose oft rebellion has been so treated, O ye soldiers of the cross. Te

have been furnished with songs in the house of their pilgrimage, as you pilgrims to Zion. Oh, how often has God wrought deliverance for you the most unlikely! how often has he, as it were, brought water out of the rock to you, and raised down manna from heaven upon you! how often has he furnished you a feast of fat things in the wilderness, and prepared before you a table in the very presence of your enemies! These mercies are not, indeed, equal to the glories of heaven. No. But surely they are remarkable provision in a desert, amazing blessings in an accursed world, astonishing delights for persons not come to their rest. Be content, therefore, with such things as ye have. Instead of marvelling at your woes, marvel rather at your joys. Neither murmur ye, as some of the Israelites also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. "For all these things," observes an Apostle, "happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." 1 Cor. x. 11.

See; The fact that we are not yet come to our rest, requires us to avoid present resting.

I have already urged you to value present comforts, but now I must guard you against overvaluing them. They are excellent aids on the way to your inheritance, and cannot in this light be too much prized or improved; but oh! they will make a sorry substitute for the inheritance itself. That saying of Christ, though simple, is terrible—"ye have your reward"—all the reward you will ever receive; and be assured, my hearers, ye incur this sentence, if ye exalt temporal delights to the first place in your affections. Whatever ye prize, as your portion, shall be your portion; and if ye say of this earth, it is my heaven, there shall no other heaven be given you. I would be the more earnest on this topic, from being convinced that, by this resting, many in our own land, and own churches, are inconsiderately forfeiting everlasting felicity. They think they have either got, or, at all events, will get, their good things in this life, and therefore it is they at last lift up their eyes in hell, being in torment. Yea, and such a stage of security have many already reached, can hear of their danger, and neither shun nor dread it. Even the most appalling proofs of this world's vanity do not can witness the

raiser torn from his treasures—they can behold their own dead buried out of their sight—they can feel the pangs of mortality within their own persons—they can see and feel all this, and yet undauntedly aver, "our mountain standeth strong, and we shall never be moved." But the more that any are at ease in Zion, the more strongly would I protest unto them, this is not your rest. In the bowels of christian compassion, I warn every one of you, that a false peace is abroad, which is slaying its thousands, and that if ye first make your bed on earth, ye shall next make it in hell. By all the worthlessness of things seen and temporal, by all the value of eternal felicity, by all the terrors of everlasting destruction, by all these things, I beseech you to reckon this world a wilderness, and this life a pilgrimage. Esteem present mercies as privileges, but oh! never, never make them your portion, for you are "not yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you."

The fact that we are not yet come to our rest, requires us to be seeking the rest which is to come.

Even though we perceived the worthlessness of this present world, that were not enough, if we did not seek a better. The Israelites seemed always alive to the insufficiency of their existing condition, but then they erred, and erred fatally, in not advancing, as God required them, to obtain possession of the better country. So many in our own day, when overwhelmed with calamity, are ready enough to decry this life, and to weep and howl for the miseries which have come upon them. But what of all this, when their acknowledgment of present evil is attended with no desires, no petitions, no strivings for that eternal life which is hid with Christ in God. While, then, my brethren, we look away from things seen and temporal, let us farther set our affections on things not seen and eternal, and let us labour, as an Apostle says, to enter into this rest. Oh! why should we not? Is it because the rest of heaven is not worth seeking? That were a strange opinion of a promised rest, a complete rest, a rest in true riches, an eternal rest. Will you tell me, then, that the rest is good, and that if ye could only obtain it, ye would forthwith give yourselves to its acquisition, but that ye are very doubtful of success, and therefore despaired for exertion. Oh, ex
every

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

the Israelites. They credited the report that the land was good, that it was a land flowing with milk and honey; but then they also entertained the objection, "we are not able to go up against this people, for they are stronger than we." And thus ye admit the goodness of heaven, but argue that intervening difficulties are numerous and insurmountable. And to whom sware God that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not: they could not enter in, because of unbelief. How loud, then, how very loud, the call on us, to beware lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief! And on what can this unbelief rest? The inheritance is precious! Yes; but not more so than the precious blood of Christ, with which it has been purchased. The path is dark and intricate! Yes; but God has furnished us with a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path. Our own minds are blinded and wayward! Yes; but God has promised to pour out his Spirit upon us, to make known his words unto us. But why doubt and debate, when we ought to be progressing? It becomes us even now to be prosecuting our heavenward journey. When the Israelites were required to march, the supernatural cloud, which overhung the

Tabernacle, went from it, and passed on before them. And now methinks the heavenly signal is displayed, and doth summons us to proceed. What spirit is so cowardly or insensible, as dare to stay behind? All things encourage us to advance. A better than the earthly Canaan is before us; a greater leader than Moses offers to guide us; and the millions of the glorified are invoking us, by their reward, to imitate their example. Imagine them impending over you, as a great cloud of witnesses, and hear their expostulating appeal, "Will ye fall where we stood? will ye flee where we fought? will ye basely surrender where we gloriously triumphed? Oh! be not slothful, but followers of us, who, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises."

From this discourse, we may infer,

First, the infatuation of the wicked, who, besides not having come to this rest, are sedulously shunning it by a contrary course; and,

Secondly, the happiness of the righteous, who, though they have not yet come to this rest, are hourly coming to it, and whose very bereavements teach not more strikingly the vanity of this world, than the proximity of a better.

THE GLORY OF HIS CHURCH, THE DESIGN OF CHRIST'S LOVE AND SACRIFICE;

A SERMON PREACHED

By the Rev. ALEXANDER TURNER,

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"Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it: that he might present it to himself a glorious Church."—EPH. v. 25—27.

* THE position of the words which we have read, their obvious intention in the present passage, and certain of the expressions themselves, evidently direct our thoughts to the relation subsisting between Christ and his Church, as shadowed forth by the earthly relation between husband and wife. This relation or union is described by various figures in the Holy Scriptures—as by that of a vine and its branches—a head and the members of its body. It is also still further explained by such passages as teach that Christ, by his Spirit, dwells in the individual members of his Church—that they eat his flesh, and drink his blood—that they

are baptized with the same unction of the Holy One, wherewith he, in his humanity, was baptized—that they dwell in him, and he in them—and in that wondrous petition of the Saviour himself, in reference to the members of his spiritual body, "that they may all be one; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."

None of these figures or descriptions is, by itself, sufficient to convey to us an adequate idea of this mutual relation. Each one presents us with a different view of the subject, the same object examined from different points; but the idea derived even from all of them combined, conveys to us

an impression, as leaves us convinced, that there is therein contained something which we do not fully understand. The one suggested by our text—especially when regarded with reference to the peculiar bearing of the expressions employed, “he gave himself for his Church,” and “that he might *present it to himself*”—recalling, as it does, such expressions as these, “Thy Maker is thy husband,” and the “Bride the Lamb’s wife,” as applied, in the Book of Revelation, to the Church, leads, we doubt not, the mind of every Scripture reader back to those ancient eastern customs which the sacred historian describes; especially to the history of the patriarch Jacob, who, having left his native land, betook him to the country of his kinsman Laban, and under him served for Rachel, whom he loved. So was it with Christ and his Church. For her, having been rich, he became poor, took upon him the nature of her members, the seed of Abraham, and served in obedience to the law. He so loved the Church as to give himself for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church.

The first subject suggested by these words, is the *love* of Christ, as that which prompted him to the sacrifice. But it is very obvious, that, however strong the affection of any one may be towards its object, he must have some special design in view in reference to this object, ere he put himself to labour in its behalf; and the strength of such affection will be seen both in the end designed toward the object, and in the means whereby this end is to be accomplished. Esau, for example, was the object of Isaac’s affection; and the design of Isaac, on his deathbed, was to bless Esau with a nobler blessing than his brother. The children of Israel were the objects of the divine favour or affection; and the design of God, in reference to these objects of his affection, was to raise them above all the other nations of the world, to make Jerusalem the queen of the whole earth. In like manner, the affection of Christ had a special design in view, in reference to his Church: it was, as our text informs us, “that he might present it to himself a *glorious* Church.” The *glory*, therefore, of *his* Church, as the design which Christ had in view, is the second thing which demands our attention in the passage before us.

The first thing, then, which requires our *love* of Christ towards his

Church. We are not at present to inquire concerning the *depth*—that may be considered indirectly under our second head—but into the *nature* of Christ’s love. Now, though it be true that this was really divine love, the very love of the Godhead exercised even from eternity, when, in the unsearchable counsels, it was determined that the foreseen destruction of myriads of the human race should be prevented, and a Church, chosen according to the dictates of infinite wisdom, should be rescued, and made holy, and glorified for ever; yet, since to us, Christ in his human nature is, in all respects, a living and embodied revelation of the unseen God, the express image of his person, the means whereby alone we can approximate to a certain knowledge of his character and attributes; since, whosoever has seen him, has seen the Father, and consequently has seen himself also in reference to his eternal state, as he was before he assumed the nature of man (as far as it is intended that any revelation of him should be made); it is from his person, as bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, that we are to gather our instruction as to the character whether of the Father or of the Son. And while we thus study the nature of that love which glowed in the breast of Christ towards his Church, we will be freed from many of the difficulties which necessarily attach to the subject, when we would look *immediately* into the character of the unsearchable God. If, for instance, a question occur to us, in reference to the particular love of Christ towards his Church, as distinguished from that general love in which all his creatures share, and our minds are sorely perplexed in endeavouring to perceive how it is, that a Being of infinite wisdom and infinite power should still be said to cherish emotions of love and pity towards those whom his justice has determined to leave for ever in the pit which they are digging for their own destruction; then, if we had but wisdom enough to satisfy ourselves with satisfactory evidence simply of the fact, it would be sufficient to turn to the history of our Saviour, and to perceive Him in whom dwelt the fulness of the wisdom and knowledge of the Godhead, acting towards all, as from the dictates of purest love and pity—keeping intimate company even from the beginning with him who, he knew, should betray him, selecting him to an office of trust, and, just when about to commit a crime so black that it should stain

a world already accursed—even then forewarning him of his danger, though he knew full well that he was destined to a fate, in comparison with which it were better that he had never been born. Or to see him pitying, even unto tears, the approaching fate of the holy city, weeping over the destruction of those whom his justice determined him to destroy. In these examples you perceive the exercise of human feelings and deep emotion; but they were the feelings and the emotions of Him who was the express image of God, and, therefore, they are to us just the expression of God's character, made known through the channel of human conduct and sympathies—attributes of the divine nature of which we could not form any distinct conception, till they were thus let down to the level of our minds, by being exhibited after the mode of our own feelings and emotions. There still, notwithstanding all this, may remain a difficulty as to the *manner* of the thing,—the absolute reconcileableness of those apparently discordant attributes of the divine administration—the willingness to save, with the ultimate and everlasting ruin. This difficulty must be removed or lessened by other distinct considerations; but, as to the fact itself, who that in faith has seen Jesus weeping and lamenting over the coming ruin of Jerusalem, which, for her sins, even he had himself condemned, can ever doubt that there is truth in that gracious declaration, that God willetteth not that any should perish, but willetteth that all should be saved?

The common feeling, however, with which Christ views all mankind, including his Church considered merely as such, is rather that of general benevolence than of love. There could be nothing of *complacency* therein—nothing of that feeling which the beautiful, or the virtuous, or the amiable, in general, excites. There might be, as it were, the yearnings of a fatherly affection over a rebellious and wicked child; but, besides this, there could be none of those pleasurable complacent emotions with which, in addition to the merely instinctive, paternal feeling, the delighted parent views a child that is virtuous and great. There could be nothing of this kind; for the Church, in herself, and all mankind besides, when viewed by the Son from the depths of eternity, as in the state to which all should reduce themselves, instead of exhibiting any quality that might be loved, exhibited

the appearance of a race individually and wholly polluted with the abominable thing which God hates.

But this mere feeling of benevolence, it is very obvious, does not at all correspond with that love to his Church which is ascribed to Christ. There is positive complacency there—there is the expression of a felt delight—an amount of divine affection pouring itself forth through the channels of human feelings and sympathies, which the language of man is felt unable to utter. The peculiar expressions of every great and endearing relation of human life are all combined, and thus combined, are felt to be inadequate. The feelings of the mighty monarch towards his subjects—the heroic feelings of the conqueror towards those whom he rescues from oppression—the feelings of the father, the husband, the brother, and the friend, are all ascribed to Christ in reference to his Church. And, indeed, though no other passage in the Scriptures had been given us, descriptive of this love, even that in our text would have shown that it was something immeasurably greater than the mere common feeling of benevolence: “Christ loved his Church, and gave himself for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church.” Where then was the difference which excited such diversity of sentiment in the same divine breast? God only knoweth. The cause lieth in the unfathomable secrets of the councils of the Eternal, shrouded in a mystery which man cannot comprehend. It was not that the future members of the Church exhibited in themselves any thing of virtuous or amiable attraction, for the whole race alike exhibited an undistinguished mass of depravity, or distinguished only by deeper stains of a common pollution; nor that in themselves they exhibited any symptoms even of possible regeneration, for all alike were dead in trespasses and sins. This only we know—and that even from the character of God himself—that the whole procedure was the result of infinite wisdom; an act, indeed, of the sovereignty of Him who gives no account of his doings, but still a sovereignty guided, not by caprice, but necessarily by omniscience and perfect wisdom. This should satisfy our minds, for the case stands simply thus—that in the depths of a dark abyss necessarily and infinitely beyond the reach of man—beyond the reach of any created being to explore—a series of transactions was effected, the bearing and re-

suits of which are seen upon this earth and before the face of man, encompassing him around and crossing his path, and again stretching off into the unfathomable abyss of the future eternity. But this is man's consolation, that in that unknown region where the plan of the everlasting universe with its unnumbered successive changes was laid, and the first impulses given to them all, nothing was designed, and nothing done, but by a Being of infinite wisdom, to whom the end was present even from the beginning.

Now, if this shall satisfy us as to the first or ultimate point, then we shall have materials in the Word of God, and even in our text, with which a solution of the rest may be effected. For now we have no longer to pry into an unfathomable mystery; we have facts whereon to rest ourselves. We may proceed softly according to God's councils, though we cannot explain the reasons of these councils. The love of Christ being fixed (though we know not how) upon his Church, we can perceive how it now partakes of the character of complacent love—we can perceive how he should be satisfied when he saw of the travail of his soul. Not that even yet there was any thing innately amiable in that Church. In herself she was still polluted and inglorious; but the time was now to come, and it was present to the eye of Christ, when that Church, regenerated, should be presented to himself, fresh and lovely with the dew of youth, and adorned with the beauty of holiness. The eye of the Omniscent One, as he glanced over the whole series of her destinies, passed by the season of her unholy state, her depravity, and pollutions, and apostasy, as things which at last should nowhere be found, being about to be washed away by his own blood, and blotted for ever from the book of his Father's remembrance. And it rested with complacency and delight upon her in her glorified state, beaming with the reflected rays of his own divine effulgence, as her eternal, unchangeable, yet ever increasing condition. He loved her with a divine love; for now, after a momentary eclipse, she had regained a heavenly lustre, and exhibited in the face of the whole creation, a glorious image of his own moral perfection. He loved her with deep human affection, for now she presented all that was attractive in regenerated nature, and her recovered glory, and his

own interests as man, were for ever united; for the achievement of her redemption was the means of his own exaltation, as mediator, to the throne of the whole universe.

We stated a little ago, that, however strong the affection of any one may be towards its object, it must have some special design in view in reference to this object, ere he put himself to labour in its behalf. Now, the love of Christ has this peculiarity—that the very design which he had in view in reference to his Church, that for the accomplishment of which he put himself to labour in her behalf, is the very thing which rendered her to him an object of *complacent* affection. His, therefore, was a generous, self-originating love. He laboured to make his Church worthy of his affection. He was smitten and afflicted, despised of men, forsaken of God, and crucified unto death—all that his Church might be cleansed of her pollution, and be deserving of his love. He loved her, at the first, for reasons which mortal man cannot know, even because so it seemed good in his sight: but this love prompted him to a design which put her in such a condition that he should love her with another love, which man can fully comprehend.

Now, this last is that which we proposed, secondly, to contemplate—the design of Christ in reference to his Church—the end for which he purchased her even with his own blood, viz., that he might present her to himself a glorious Church. And though we cannot, in our present state, form any distinct conception of that glory which remains hereafter to be revealed, yet, from dependent circumstances, and from actual descriptions given in the sacred records, we may form a general idea of the overpowering greatness of that glory to which she is destined. But, before proceeding to the consideration of these, let this be distinctly remembered, that that which forms the very basis of all her other glory is her purity and holiness. This is that, without which she could not have appeared among the companies of un-fallen spirits, or in the presence of Him who cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence—that which renders her capable of apprehending happiness, and in which her happiness shall consist—that, without which her glory could not by possibility have been obtained, and which, therefore, was the end of Christ's death; for he gave himself for the Church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, in

ceder that he might present it to himself a glorious Church : and, therefore, let every one who considers himself a member of the Church militant on earth, and hopes to be a sharer of the glory of the Church triumphant in heaven, purify himself from all iniquity.

To perceive aright the subject before us, we should conceive the Church already sanctified and purified, and about to be presented to Christ. We should conceive it as already glorified ; for it was thus contemplated by Christ himself when he set himself to work out its redemption, even as every wise man contemplates the end of his undertaking, ere he sets himself to further its execution. But even before proceeding to any direct contemplation of this, our minds may gather sufficient evidence, though not of the kind, yet of the greatness of that glory, from the knowledge of the preparation and the cost of its purchase.

For although there may be dependent upon the atonement of Christ, effects infinitely greater and more numerous than we can even conceive, though we know that by it all things were reconciled, whether they be in heaven or in earth, yet we learn from Scripture, that its direct and immediate effect was just the redemption of the Church. The sacrifice, therefore, of Christ, was the cost of this purchase, and thus, whatever was preparatory to his appearance and atonement on this earth, was also preparatory for the future glory of the Church. This comprehends nothing less than the whole previous dispensations of God—his first institutions—the heavenly communications in the Patriarchal age, in so far as they had reference to the coming of the Messiah—the whole Jewish system, with all its curiously adapted and prospective rites—all of these were but successive steps whereby the Church should ascend to the throne of her glory, or rather the separate parts of a mighty system whose connecting point was the Redeemer, whose result was the Church's exaltation. And, above all, it was for this that the Son of God gave even himself, for this that the mightiest of all beings veiled his divine glory, became poor, assuming the weakest form of man, and offered himself a sacrifice to his Father. If this was an act of humiliation implying a greater degree of positive condescension, a sacrifice the value of which was infinitely more than if a universe of created beings had been utterly destroyed ;

then how great must be that amount of for which this was undertaken, for such preparations were made, and such humiliation submitted to !

Moreover, since the present state of the Church is preparatory to its future state, the care of Almighty God towards either individuals, or the Church universal in this world, and also its present glory, lead us to anticipate the greatness of the future glory. Now, in reference even to its present state, thus saith the Lord, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly : he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season : his leaf shall not wither ; and whatsoever he doeth, it shall prosper." "The Lord is their shepherd, they shall not want. He maketh them to lie down in green pastures : he leadeth them beside the still waters." "The king's daughter," says the Psalmist, in reference to the Church, "is all glorious within : her clothing is of wrought gold." "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round about his people, from henceforth, even for ever." "Thy Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel ; the God of the whole earth shall he be called : with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." Again, saith God of his Church, speaking by the mouth of his servant Isaiah ; "A vineyard of red wine, I the Lord do keep it : I will water it every moment ; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." Of these descriptions some apply to the Church under the Jewish preparatory dispensation. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved ; God shall help her : the Lord of Hosts is with us. This God is our God for ever and ever." And we know that, in their sacred dedicatory ministrations in the temple, "the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister, because of the cloud ; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house." Yet was that glory even as nothing in comparison with the glory of the full christian dispensation. "For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth : for if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remains.

eth is glorious." Now, if all this be done for the Church, still in her state of tribulation—if God be now her God crowning her with honour, dwelling in the midst of her, causing all things to work together for her good, though she be yet in that state in which she was to have only persecution ;—if even now, when her members are sanctified only in part, and she lives but in faith, looking to those things which eye cannot see, the angels of heaven are all ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto her members—how great shall be their glory when raised to their exalted state, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ, when they inherit that which is promised as joint-heirs with him who possesseth all things, and when "the riches of the glory of his mystery" shall be poured out upon them ! If already they enjoy the fellowship of God, having communion with the Father of their spirits, and are already come to an innumerable company of angels, how great shall be their glory when they shall have received the glory which the Father gave unto the Son, and the crown of righteousness, and the exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and are set down upon the throne with Jesus who overcame !

But in order to approximate to distinctness of idea upon this subject, let us separate our thoughts ; and, being now somewhat prepared by our consideration of the mighty arrangements which were made, and our general idea of the gloriousness to be revealed, let us, considering the Church as one collected body redeemed by Christ himself, in order that she might be presented to him, contemplate, first of all, the time and manner of her presenting.

The time of her presenting is immediately after the number of her sanctified members is completed—when all whom the Father has given to Christ shall have been added to his Church. This is none other than the great day of general judgment ; for Christ who, as to his bodily presence, has long been absent from his suffering Church, shall again descend to the scene of her bondage, and claim as his own, his costly purchase. And with him and his thousand angels shall come the sanctified spirits of all the successive generations of his saints. And now the mystery of God is about to be revealed, and the trumpet of God shall sound, and at that sound shall arise, from the earth and from the sea, the bodies of all

those that have died in all generations, and, from hell, the spirits of the accursed. This is now the time of her presenting. The eyes of every glorious spirit in the universe are bent intensely on the scene, anxious to know the final result of that greatest of all events in the history of the creation—the mystery of those things which they had desired to look into—the incarnation and death of the Son of God. The earth is crowded with all who ever trod thereon. The vast concave of heaven is crowded all around with innumerable angels, anxious spectators ; and Christ in human nature, in form as a man, shall ascend the great white throne. And now begins the exceeding glory of the Church. He has sent his angels to collect his elect from the four winds of heaven ; he has sounded the trumpet of God and assembled the universe to the scene—and now in presence of them all he has ascended the throne, to confess his Church before his Father and his holy angels. Already its members were equal to these angels, for their souls were purified even to the likeness of Christ himself, and their bodies, when they started from the slumber of the grave, were incorruptible, glorious and spiritual. Their nature was the same as his who fills the throne of God. But now they are selected from all the universe besides, as those whom the eternal God delighteth to honour ; and from the throne of God, in presence of all, amidst the silence of universal being, he proclaims, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you."—This is the marriage of the Lamb. And now the silence shall be broken—the admiration of those innumerable angels shall burst forth and fill the universe, "as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice and give honour to him ; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

It requires not, nay it forbids any remarks, to make you perceive how glorious is this presentation of the redeemed Church. This world affords nothing with which it may be even most remotely compared. Kings of the earth have exhausted the wealth of empires to mark some day of their festivity, and nations have been summoned to adorn and witness the scene. All this may have been done to glorify those whom kings

would honour; but here he who would honour his Church is the King of kings, whom the universe obeys. The spectators of the scene are not assembled nations of mortal men, but the nations and princes of heaven—thrones, and dominions, and powers, seraphim and cherubim, the angels of the Lord of hosts. And the crowded theatre of this scene is not the work of mortal hands, but this earth, the work of God, surrounded by the crowded infinite expanse of these encircling heavens.

The Church being thus presented by Christ to himself, shall forthwith, ere she leave that earth which had been the scene of her tribulations, and ascend in glory to the heaven of heavens, exhibit one act of mighty triumph. Not only shall she be acquitted from the charge preferred by her great accuser, but, being acquitted, and honoured with great glory, as we have seen, she shall proceed to judge that world which had persecuted her. "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" The law was given at first through the ministration of angels; but the judgment of those are the breakers of that law, is

in part, to redeemed men. But these are but the beginning of her glory; and though we cannot now conceive the gloriousness of those things which God has reserved for her throughout eternity, yet may we gather from Scripture some idea of her state. Her members are kings and priests unto God; they are crowned with crowns of glory which fade not away, and have palms in their hands. They are like to Christ himself. They walk with Christ clothed in white raiment. They sit with Christ upon his throne. They dwell in the holy Jerusalem, bearing the glory of God. They have a right to the tree of life. They are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on his throne shall dwell among them. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto fountains of living waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Such then is the glorious presenting of that Church which Christ redeemed and himself, for this special purpose, we should yet consider the peculiar glory of the Church herself, under

We have already stated that chief glory consists in her purity, and in her reflecting the glory of the moral i of God. Christ first purified her washing of his own blood, by the washing of water by the Word, and adorned her with the glory of his own imputed righteousness, and sanctified her throughout by the efficacy of his own Spirit. But we have not time now to illustrate the various particulars in which her glory consists. To one only we may briefly advert, but one which is delightful to the contemplation of every Christian, as it is to the angels of God, who rejoice over the repentance of every sinner, viz., That the Church shall be glorious in numbers.

It is no doubt the truth of Scripture, that the gate which leadeth to the way towards heaven is strait, and few comparatively enter in thereto. And our own observation, being furnished from these same Scrip-

with tests whereby to judge, corroborates the melancholy statement. If we look back to the ages that are past, sins and judgments meet our eye on every hand—a world sunk in darkest ignorance and wickedness, and even that one nation where alone light shone in the midst of the darkness, reflecting but few and scattered rays of that glory which testifies the heirs of heaven. Or if we look around us to the present state of the nations, there, first of all, meet our eye, as occupying beyond comparison the great proportion of this world, those desolate lands where, even in external profession, Christianity (the only means of human redemption) is utterly unknown, or known only under the most corrupt forms. Pagan idolatry, Mahometan imposture, and Papal superstition, stand prominently forth, and overshadow that remains of Christianity pure even in profession. And, though to this last alone we confine our attention, what errors are apparent! what wickedness practised! So that even besides that ungodliness of which the laws of man can take no account, but which, nevertheless, ensures the severity of future retribution, there is a flood of crimes destructive of Society, which the firmest barriers of human legislature cannot repress. Of all our race, those who profess Christianity are but very few. But even of these few who profess Christianity, those who possess its spirit and its power are but a little flock.

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of truth has never at any time left himself without a witness; the gates of hell never can prevail against his Church. Even in the darkest periods of her history, there existed many hidden sparks of that heavenly fire—hundreds who, in the time of apparently universal apostasy, had not bent the knee to Baal—thousands who, in time of fiery persecution, resisted unto blood, and counted not their lives dear unto them; besides the thousands more in peaceful days whose unobtrusive piety found no historian to record it. When you think of the thousands of the past generations of the saints, who have successively, since the world began, been continually passing from this earth to join the collecting numbers of the Church in heaven—and chiefly when you look forward to the glorious prospect which prophecy spreads out before us, to the eye of faith, when the Spirit shall be poured out upon the heathen, and nations shall be born in a day—you may see the wilderness and the solitary place become glad, and the desert blossoming abundantly as the rose, and rejoicing even with joy and singing—the kingdoms of the earth become the kingdoms of our God and his anointed—the whole earth one glorious temple of holy worshippers, and incense and a pure offering ascending from the rising to the setting of the sun. When you contemplate these things, you perceive that Christianity has scarcely yet begun to operate—that her triumphs, mighty though they have been have been but as a gathering of the first fruits—a stream, as yet, which endeth in an ocean—the dawnings only of a glorious day. And, therefore, you may well perceive how they shall indeed be many, who shall come from the “east and from the west,” “out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation,” and “the number of them ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, a multitude which none can number.” This is that glorious Church which Christ shall confess before his Father, and present without spot or blemish to himself.

The station of the Church, in the scale of being—all whose members are kings and priests to, nay, joint-heirs with, and brethren of, Him who is Lord of lords and King of the whole universe—and her design in reference to the intelligent creation as the body of Christ, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all, might now be adverted to;

but of this we can only now: while on earth, in her imperfect preparatory form, she manifested to the principalities and powers of heaven the manifold wisdom of God; much more in her complete and glorious state shall she manifest the riches of his manifold wisdom.

After the contemplation of these things, let me entreat each one to pause, and seriously to examine the state of his own breast. When you think of the disinterested, self-originating, profound love of Christ, manifested by so overwhelming a sacrifice, are you conscious of a corresponding gratitude within? The question is to you of infinite importance, and let each now answer it in the silence of his own heart, as in the sight of God.

And now, if you have resolved the question in your own hearts, each one for himself, you have, by an act of your own consciousness, divided yourselves, and God at this moment knoweth it, into two distinct classes, for many, we trust, have been enabled already to answer, “Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee;” but others dare not say that they are conscious of any such feeling. Now, in reference to the latter: if ye have never at any time felt the glow of gratitude excited by the contemplation of the character, and especially of the love of Christ; if you have never felt the warmth of that love by which faith works, prompting you to purify yourselves for the practice of holiness, then listen only to the voice of your own conscience, and it will tell you how hard your heart is, how depraved are your affections, how awfully dead in trespasses and sins. For here is an exhibition of disinterested love, the most overpowering that God himself could make—the Son of God descending to this earth, having veiled his Godhead and become poor, and by the sacrifice of his own human life which as man he loved, just as any one loves life, and amidst agonies and horrors under which his humanity shrank, making atonement for the world. And now having wrought out deliverance, he is offering forgiveness and salvation to you and to all; and, that your heart may be moved, he tells you of what he relinquished, and all the torture and tears which it cost him, and of the future glory which he has laid up for all that love him, all of which may be yours, if you will. You know that this is a being who deserves the paramount affections of your heart, and,

therefore, your own conscience tells you distinctly, that your heart is somehow dead in sin. Nay, every faculty of your soul condemns you. Imagination tells you that she cannot fancy a being so deserving of your admiration and love. Reason corroborates her verdict. Memory tells you of the waste of affection which you have lavished on inferior earthly objects. Your whole soul testifies against itself that it is in a state of ruin, with disordered faculties, misplaced affections, spiritually dead to God and holiness. In such a state you have no part in the future glory of the Church. Your own heart tells you so. For just as that glory and honour are great which await the followers of Christ, so certain and so great are the dishonour, and anguish, and destruction, which await all in that very state in which you are. And just as the love and condescension of Christ were great beyond all comparison, so great will be the indignation of despised affection with which he will visit all who refuse to listen and obey. He has himself declared, that he will trample them in his fury, and mock when their fear cometh. But still that condition may be reversed if you are willing. He has not yet assumed the seat of judgment. He sits on the throne of mercy. He yet waits to be gracious. He yet offers, nay, implores you, by all that he did and suffered, to enter into friendship with him—that ye also may be partakers of his glory.

Lastly. To those who are conscious of a corresponding gratitude, sincere, though it may be disproportionately feeble, I would say, the future glory of the Church is yours. He who has begun the good work, will assuredly carry it on. He who has implanted the seed of genuine faith, will water and cherish it by his Spirit, till the day of his appearing. For you Christ died. He saw you from afar, even from the depths of eternity, and on you he set his love. And poor though you may be, or groaning under the remains of a corrupt nature, yet rejoice, and by faith resist and persevere. You are come to the innumerable company of angels, who minister to you unseen, and with joy you shall hear the sound of the last trump, and shall arise to glory and immortality, and be presented faultless before the assembled universe. You shall judge the world, walk with Christ in the new Jerusalem, and sit upon his throne among that blessed multitude which none can number; and, therefore, already unite your song with that of your ransomed brethren in heaven, who have gone thither before you, saying, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood—to Him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen."

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SERMON by the Rev. HENRY GREY, A.M., Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. D. YOUNG, Perth.

Price 2d.

THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF FAITH

A SERMON PREACHED

By the Rev. HENRY GREY, A.M.,
Minister of St. Mary's Church, Edinburgh.

"Faith is—the evidence of things not seen."—HEBREWS xi. 1.

RELIGION, that it may be either acceptable to God or profitable to man, must be founded on known and ascertained facts, must correspond, on the one hand, with the real character and dispensations of God, and, on the other, with the actual moral condition and prospects of man. But as the truth on these important points can be known only by revelation, *faith* in the divine testimony, that is, a firm persuasion and cordial reception of the truth divinely communicated to us, is essential to the existence of genuine religion; for truth, however clearly announced, can produce no salutary effect, if it be not believed. Accordingly, both in the Old and New Testaments, faith is continually represented as the grand characteristic peculiarity of the approved servants of God, at once distinguishing them from the world, and uniting them with one another. As exercised by the individual believer, it establishes the authority of the truth in his heart, and, by its influence on his whole character and conduct, marks him out as a child of God. As pervading the Church in all its members, and in all periods of time, it communicates a unity and consistency of character to the whole household of faith, and exhibits true religion as one and the same thing, under all the various dispensations of divine providence, and changing scenes of human probation. It forms a connecting bond between the servants of the same master, however remote from each other in the circumstances of time and place, and presents them to our contemplation as one family, resembling in character, united in interest, alike governed by the will, and aiming at the glory of their common Father. The energy and consistency

that which renders the conduct of eminent believers, in any one age, a suitable and animating example for guiding and stimulating the efforts of their brethren in all after ages.

The faith of which the Apostle speaks in the chapter before us is that which divines have called *saving* or *justifying faith*, as is evident from the whole tenor of the epistle, which every-where treats of the "great salvation," and is professedly designed to commend the author of it to the confidence and affection of the Hebrews; and particularly from the last verse of the preceding chapter: "We are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that *believe to the saving of the soul.*" But while speaking of the faith that accompanies salvation, he speaks with a special reference to its *sanctifying* influence, his design being to illustrate its energy as the principle of all holy obedience. The view he takes of it corresponds with that taken by the apostle James, in the 2d chapter of his epistle; for as there, in opposition to that faith which is "without works," and is "dead being alone," St. James shows that genuine faith evinces its vitality by its fruits, so here St. Paul declares its efficacy as the principle that has ever sustained and animated the servants of the Lord in their labours of love, and in their patience of hope, amid efforts the most heroic, and sufferings the most excruciating.

If, then, you ask, *What, in this general view of its nature, is the object on which faith is exercised?* I answer, *truth divinely revealed.* It rests not on the conjectures of human sagacity, the conclusions of human reasons, the opinions or testimony of fallible men, but on the *word of the living God.* And the

God has been pleased to make of his character and will, of the way of salvation and the path of duty, of the designs of Providence and the ultimate results of human actions, are objects of faith, for they are all stamped with divine authority, and we are required to receive them all as coming from God. But, above all, the conspicuous and appropriate object of saving faith, as comprising the essence, and, as it were, concentrating in itself all the converging rays of divine revelation, is *the doctrine of the Saviour*—that “God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to men their trespasses.” This glorious truth has from the beginning formed the grand subject of the divine testimony, and the reception of this on the part of man is the great means of salvation. This is the substance of that gospel, of which it is said, “He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.”

Here we may remark, that as faith must have *revealed truth* for its basis, it does not consist in believing, that *I personally am one of God's elect, or am of the number of the saved, or am a believer*, for these are propositions nowhere found in Scripture; but it consists in believing, *what the Scriptures declare of Christ*—that he is almighty to save, and no less willing than able, and that all who believe in him shall be saved. Faith, I say, relates not to the state of my soul individually, but to the truth revealed concerning Christ. As for the proposition, that I individually am in a state of salvation, this is not the direct object of faith, but an inference resting on the evidence of my possessing the principle; which evidence, again, is found in the fruits of faith, whether more immediate or more remote, whether consisting in the peace and love it diffuses over the soul, or in the patience and good works it gives rise to in the life.

If you next ask, *what are the acts of faith as an internal principle?* I answer, these correspond with the nature of the several truths set before it. While some divines have maintained, that faith consists directly and peculiarly in *conviction* of the understanding, and others have conceived that it includes in its very essence the *approbation and love* of the truth, it is admitted and insisted on by all who have any just views on the subject, that, to constitute true faith, our conviction of the truth must be such as to affect the heart, and awaken those feelings which the truth is fitted to excite. Does God speak in the language of *threatening?* Faith, realizing his re-

sistless power, spotless purity and unchanging veracity, receives the warning with reverential awe, and trembles in anticipation of its accomplishment. Does he address us in the language of *promise?* Faith recognises his condescension and love, and confidently looks forward to the enjoyment of the promised blessing. Does the Word declare, that “all have sinned,” and that “the whole world is guilty?” Faith applies the declaration to ourselves, and awakens conviction of sin and sense of guilt. Does it declare, that “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life?” Faith discerns the greatness of the gift, and awakens at once desire and hope. It consists especially in *trusting in the Saviour*; and the evidence of its reality is found in the patience and obedience to which it gives rise.

If you ask, *what is the origin of faith?* I answer, its origin is divine, and it is the work of the Spirit of God. For though the truths of Scripture are accompanied with abundant evidence of divine authority—and it is a manifest dictate of reason, that the understanding of man should submit to the wisdom of God—yet the perverseness of a nature radically sinful, leads us to reject and resist the truth. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; neither can know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” “Faith is not our own, but is the gift of God.” It is his Spirit that opens the understanding, overcomes the resistance of the heart, and endows the truth with all-conquering efficacy. Yet in this process he acts with us as rational creatures, constraining our assent, not by absolute power, but by bringing home to our minds, in demonstration of the Spirit, the evidence and authority of the truth itself. The means, too, prescribed for the attainment of faith, are suited to our nature; namely, the study of the Scriptures as the ground of our faith, and prayer to the God of all grace for the aid of his Spirit.

Having offered these brief remarks on the nature of faith, I proceed to consider more particularly its moral influence, in animating the obedience and sustaining the patience of the saints, as illustrated by the Apostle. The energy of his language, in his description of it, is remarkable. “*Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*” The words import, that while those things that are objects of hope are yet future and distant, faith gives them a present subsistence,

and puts us, as it were, into immediate possession of them ; and while those things that are invisible, are as nothing to the eye of sense, which looks for them and sees them not, faith sets them before the mind, as by sensible demonstration, in all their real magnitude and grandeur. If faith be wanting, the things of the Spirit, in the view of our blinded minds, are involved in obscurity and darkness, while the concerns of a future world are disregarded as shadowy and uncertain : faith gives demonstrative evidences to the one, and substantial reality to the other. Like those optical instruments that bring distant objects near, and enable us clearly to discover what lies quite beyond the reach of the unassisted eye, faith discloses in the strongest light things otherwise invisible, and opens before us in their awful majesty the secrets of futurity.

I. Faith is the evidence of things not seen.

Truth divinely revealed being the sole object of faith, the invisible things here spoken of must be sought for in the word of God ; and its leading truths relate to objects that can neither be seen by the eye of sense, nor discovered by the powers of reason. Its disclosures correspond with the character of their divine author ; they surpass in glory all that human imagination could have anticipated, and enlarge our knowledge, not only by presenting in new and impressive lights, those truths which reason and conscience might have suggested, but by affording infinitely important discoveries which man could never otherwise have conceived. Faith receives these discoveries as they are presented in the Word, and carries the truth to the mind with as full conviction as is produced by the testimony of the senses.

Among those unseen things, of which faith is thus the evidence, we mention,

1st. The attributes and operations of God. That no man hath seen God at any time, or can see, is a truth often announced in the Scriptures, and employed to awaken our veneration and awe. At one time he is represented as surrounded with thick darkness, which no human eye can penetrate, at another time as dwelling in light inaccessible and full of glory. "Verily," says the prophet, "thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." And the Apostle conveys the same idea when he calls him, "the king eternal, immortal, *invisible.*" At Sinai, God spake to the people out of the midst of the fire and smoke that covered the mountain, concealing him from their view ; and in the temple, he re-

sided in the cloud of glory within the sacred unapproachable recesses of the holy of holies. Now, it is the office of faith to penetrate the darkness that surrounds him, to gaze on the light in which he dwells, to enter within the veil into the most holy place, to behold the glory of the Lord, and worship in his presence. Faith demonstrates that which neither sense nor reason could discover.

The works of God in creation unquestionably afford very abundant evidences of his being and perfections, and these evidences may certainly be in some measure discerned by the mind of man, however weakened by the Fall. But still the indications of nature and providence are in many cases ambiguous ; and the conclusions which reason can draw from them are always partial and unsatisfactory. If men might be expected to infer the *wisdom* of God from the uniformity of nature's laws, the regularity of the heavenly bodies, the succession of the seasons, and the adaptation of means to ends, and of the various parts of creation to one another : yet might not this very uniformity tempt them to attribute the whole to some undeviating necessity ? or, if forced to acknowledge the hand of wisdom, might they not be led to suspect some imperfection in this wisdom, some interference of fate or chance, when they observed this order the harmony often apparently violated by unknown causes ; when they saw storms, and tempests, and earthquakes, confounding the elements of nature, obscuring her beauty, and threatening the destruction of the human race ? If they might be expected to infer the *kindness* of God from the provision made for the wants of man, from the subservience of the vegetable and animal creation to his comfort, from those natural benevolent affections that bind him to his fellows, and sweeten the scenes of domestic life ; yet might they not be led to question the justness of the inference, or even to draw a contrary conclusion, when they contemplated the sorrows, and pains, and anxieties, and distresses, that accompany him in the whole progress of life ; when they beheld famine and disease assailing him ; when they saw those feeble feelings that lead him to love his fellow-creatures, overpowered by opposing principles of selfishness, and perfidy, and cruelty, that make men mutual tormentors ; in fine, when they saw one generation after another, at the close of a short feverish existence, sinking in agony and wo, into the dark and dreaded grave ? If they might be expected to infer the *justice* of God from the intimations of conscience, and from the natural tendency of

sin to misery, and of virtue to happiness, might they not be perplexed and confounded by the numberless cases in which wickedness rides in triumph, followed by the admiration of the world, and innocence, truth, and integrity, are left to struggle with poverty, affliction, and reproach? Whatever proofs of the perfections of God may really be traced in his works and dispensations, they are found, *in fact*, to be quite insufficient to produce, in minds so weak and perverse as ours, any such conviction of his wisdom, goodness, and righteousness, as to inspire the heart with love, and form the life to obedience. "*The world*," as the apostle emphatically remarks, "*by wisdom knew not God.*" Revelation was absolutely necessary; its discoveries alone could remove the darkness that covered the human mind. These discoveries have, from the beginning of the world, preserved, among those to whom they were made, some just conceptions of the Supreme Ruler; and now, under the gospel dispensation, they set his character before us in all its majesty and purity, in all its grace and love. "*No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*"

But, my brethren, what I wish you to remark is, that the light of revelation itself is wholly unavailing, without that faith which is "*the evidence of things not seen.*" If this be wanting, its disclosures are but idle meteors glittering in the eye, but never warming the heart. It was owing to the absence of this principle, in the great majority of the Jewish nation, that the discoveries made to them by the prophets, and even by the Son of God, were so ineffectual to lead them to repentance and salvation. And it is owing to the absence of the same principle, that the gospel produces so little effect at the present day. I ask, whether, among those who acknowledge the gospel as the word of God, there are not many on whom the truth makes no abiding impression—in whose breasts no fear is awakened by declarations the most awful, no love by discoveries the most gracious, no desire by invitations and promises the most encouraging—in whose lives no change is wrought, nor any endeavours after one? How shall we account for this? Unquestionably from their want of faith. They do not deny the truth—they yield it a general assent; but as for that faith which carries demonstration to the mind, and conviction to the heart, it is manifestly altogether wanting.

Men acknowledge in words the doctrine of the *omnipresence and omniscience* of

God; but do those really believe this doctrine who pass the time from morning to night in the pursuits of folly, or in the business of the world, without one serious thought of God, without one reverent acknowledgment? Do such persons really conceive of God as having his eye ever fixed upon them, inspecting their hearts, and pondering their goings? Would not a real conviction of his omnipresence necessarily inspire them with conscientious awe? Men acknowledge the *purity* of God, and his *abhorrence of sin*, whether in the heart or in the life; but do those really believe this, who indulge in propensities which they know to be sinful, tempers which they know to be wrong, pursuits which their own conscience, when seriously consulted, condemns? Do such persons really regard themselves as objects of the divine abhorrence? Men acknowledge the *justice* of God, and his *determination* to punish the wicked; but do the wicked, though chargeable with the very crimes which the inspired writers specify, as calling down his vengeance—such works of the flesh, as fornication, profane swearing, drunkenness, hatred, wrath, strife—believe in his determination to punish them? While they are pursuing their evil ways, have they really an abiding conviction that they are "*treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath.*" That such a conviction will occasionally arise, I perfectly know, but it is usually so feeble a conviction that they quickly put it away, and betake themselves to their "*refuges of lies.*" In opposition to all the declarations of God, they persuade themselves he is too merciful to condemn them, and will not admit a doubt that they shall be happy at last. It may be thought that, however they discredit his other perfections, they at least believe in his *goodness*, since on this they rest those expectations which his other attributes would seem to discountenance. Do those, then, believe in the infinite goodness of God, who seek their happiness in every vanity rather than in him—those, who are never induced by it to inquire after God, or seek communion with him—those, in whose minds it awakens no gratitude, and on whose lives it impresses no signatures of its power? Would not his goodness and love, if really believed in, effectually draw their hearts to himself? As for that goodness to which they refer their hopes, that goodness which makes no discrimination between sin and holiness, it belongs not to God, but is the creature of a corrupt imagination, which rejects the grand gift of infinite love.

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The Scriptures represent the ungodly as practically denying every attribute of the character of God: his *omniscience*; for they say, "the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard;" his *purity*; for they "think that he is altogether such an one as themselves;" his *distributive justice*; for "thy judgments are far above out of their sight;" and "wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, thou wilt not require it;" his very *being*; for "the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." Unbelief is practical atheism.

While unbelief thus darkens the mind, and excludes God from the heart, faith presents the divine character in all its glory, and, as it were, fixes the divine residence in the soul. Animated by this principle, the soul sees God ever present, and feels him ever near. When first brought to the exercise of faith, its language is that of Job: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee." When habituated to the exercise, it still says with David, "O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me; thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising, and understandest my thought afar off." When hidden from every human eye, in the sequestered vale, or uninhabited wilderness, it still retains the conviction of Hagar, "Thou, God, seest me." And while the believer thus sets the Lord always before him, he, at the same time, realizes his spotless purity, his awful justice, his tender mercy, his inviolate truth. He views him as his Father and his God; the chosen portion of his soul. Often in holy contemplation, he surveys the divine character, and, like Moses, hidden in the cleft of the rock, beholds while God passes by, and proclaims his name. And in the active business of life, and in all its trials and distresses, still, like the same Moses, he "endures as seeing him that is invisible." He "walks before God," and acknowledges him in all his ways. As a dutiful son cherishes his affection for his father, and may be actively fulfilling his commands, when he does not directly think of him, so the believer honours and loves his heavenly Father, and cherishes the spirit of obedience, even when the truths on which his faith rests are not immediately present to his mind.

It might be interesting to consider the efficacy of faith in reference to the works and dispensations of God. Faith, resting on the divine revelation, resolves the question which so much perplexed the philosophers of old respecting the *origin of the world*, and teaches us that it is neither the

child of fate nor of chance, but that, as the Apostle remarks, "the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things that are seen were not made of things that do appear." It resolves the question respecting the *origin of moral evil*, teaching us, that "God made man upright," and that the abuse of his freedom was the cause of his fall. It resolves the question respecting *natural evil*, teaching us that it is the consequence and punishment of sin. It furnishes a clue that conducts us through all the labyrinths of providence, and assures us that a future state will clear up all difficulties, and correct all the irregularities we now observe. It vindicates the character and ways of God against all objections, and presents him as altogether to be feared, and loved, and adored.

Among the unseen things of which faith is the evidence, I mention,

2d, *The character and destiny of man.* Of these something may be discovered by the eye of reason, and something is announced by the voice of conscience; but the discoveries of the former and the testimony of the latter, while they are very far from giving us a just view of our state, are utterly insufficient to furnish the means of correcting the evils in which we are involved, and leading us to holiness and heaven. Where the word of God has been unknown, the character and condition of man, in a moral and spiritual light, have been involved in darkness, and the reasonings of men have only served to increase their perplexity. On this important subject the word of inspiration teaches, that "by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." It teaches, that our present state is not a state of original purity, nor yet of final reprobation, but a mixed state: a state of probation, of preparation for eternity. It teaches, that our nature is defiled by sin; that our hearts are "full of evil;" that we are "weak" and "without strength;" yea, "alienated from God, and enemies in our minds by wicked works;" that must be "born again of the spirit, by the incorruptible seed of the word," before we can please God or be accepted of him; but, if thus renewed, that we are "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ."

But these declarations of the Word, relating to things unseen, make no impression on the mind, if it be not imbued with a principle of faith. Is there not reason to fear that the great majority of those who acknowledge these truths, have no real belief of them? Do men indeed view them-

selves in the light of guilty sinners? Are they really persuaded that their hearts are "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked?" That they cannot know the truth but by the divine teaching, nor perform the will of God but by the help of his Spirit? If these views of human nature were, from full conviction, adopted, would men foster such vain ideas as they often entertain of the dignity of their nature, such a haughty jealousy of their imaginary honour, so much resentment of injuries, real or supposed, so much self-complacency and pride? Would they apologize, as they do, for their sins, or so highly applaud theselves for their imagined virtues? Would not one view of their character, as exhibited in the mirror of the Scriptures, expose the deceits of self-love, and inspire them with humility and abasement? Does not their pride convict them of unbelief; for if they believe the Scriptures, what have they to be proud of?

Faith, guided by the Word, enters into the secrets of the heart. Applying the declarations of Scripture to ourselves, it produces a deep-felt conviction of our sinfulness and misery: contrasting the purity of God with our vileness, the spirituality of the law with our carnal affections, it sees us altogether covered with transgressions. It forces from us the anxious inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" It opens an eternal world before us, and compels us to "flee from the wrath to come," that we may lay hold on eternal life.

3d. *The character and offices of Christ are discovered by faith.* In the first ages, the Messiah, foretold as the great future deliverer, was the chief among those *objects of hope*, of which, faith was the substance: now, since his advent in the flesh, still invisible to mortal eyes, he is the chief among those *unseen things*, of which it is the evidence. Faith is the only medium by which his character and offices are discerned. To see Christ with the bodily eye, to witness the proofs of his power, the demonstrations of his wisdom, the sorrows of his cross, the perfection of his patience, the glories of his resurrection, was not enough: it was necessary even for his immediate disciples to see him with the eye of faith; thus only could they see the glory of his character, the tenderness of his love; thus only could they view him as the sacrifice for sin and the substitute of sinners. The external evidences might assist their faith; but that faith was still more excellent, which, without having actually seen him in the body, rested simply on his word. "Thomas," said he, "thou hast seen me and hast believed; blessed

are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

But here again, we must say with the Prophet, "who hath believed our report?" Where are the evidences of faith in his personal dignity, in his expiatory sufferings? Do men indeed regard him as "God manifest in the flesh, purchasing the Church with his blood, dying for our sins, rising for our justification?" Could they, then, treat his gospel with so much indifference, hear his invitations with so little emotion, his warnings with so little apprehension? Could they view his death without one feeling of sorrow; his resurrection without one emotion of joy? Could they neglect the authority of his commands, or forget his impressive declarations of his second coming to judge the world? Would neither his love constrain, nor his terrors compel? Surely "the God of this world hath blinded their eyes, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them." Faith views him in all his awful and in all his engaging characters. It sees the love that animated him. It rests on his sacrifice, and triumphs in his righteousness. It leads us to embrace him for *our own salvation*, and to wait and long for his second coming.

4th, *The spiritual blessings of the gospel are discerned and embraced by faith.* I speak not now of those blessings that are future, of which faith is the substance; but of those that are present, though unseen, of which it is the evidence: the blessings of pardon and peace with God, of adoption into his family and communion with him, of grace, and holiness, and spiritual joy. These are things the world knows not of. It treats with ridicule those who acknowledge them as the objects of their desire, especially if, for the sake of these things, they forego worldly pleasure and profit. Justly does our Lord compare the gospel to "treasure hid in a field:" we may go over the field of Scripture a thousand times without discovering the treasure hid in it, and may even regard as visionary and enthusiastic those who seek to get possession of this treasure. Faith sees its real value, and bids us go sell all to secure it. It prefers the approbation of God, the testimony of a good conscience, and the present hope of eternal life, to all the world can offer or bestow. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you."

In concluding, I would have you reflect, *how extensive and how pernicious is the influence of unbelief.* I do not wish to speak paradoxically, and therefore will not say that

the generality are *Atheists*; but I ask whether *practical atheism* does not exceedingly prevail? Are there not many who, without denying in words the existence and perfections of God, speak and think, and act and feel, as if there were no God! Do they not virtually say, "our lips are our own;" our natural faculties are our own; our possessions are our own; our actions are our own: "who is Lord over us?" Do those who utter the name of God with profane levity, in common conversation—those who make the day of God a season of recreation and convivial entertainment—those who neglect prayer, or perform it in the most careless manner—do these really believe that God hears their every word, and inspects their inmost thought? Do those who are conscious of falsehood and injustice, who go on in the commission of known sin and in the neglect of known duty, really believe in the purity of God, and in the wrath he has denounced against all unrighteousness in men? To say that they do believe, would only aggravate their guilt, by adding to their profaneness the most presumptuous audacity. But while they cannot plead ignorance in their excuse, while they know that there is a God, they foster a secret disbelief with respect to his character; they divest him of his perfections, and will not believe what his word asserts of him.

I will not apply the term *infidels* to those who disclaim it; but I ask, whether *practical infidelity* does not exceedingly prevail? Are there not many who, without denying, in words, the divine authority of the Gospel, entertain opinions in direct opposition to its assertions, and regard as completely unnecessary what it most peremptorily demands. It declares them sinful, while they regard themselves as innocent; it condemns their sins, while they excuse them; it asserts, that "except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God;" while, without ever seeking after regeneration, they never admit a doubt that they shall be received into heaven. The Gospel declares that the name of Christ alone is given for salvation, while they never so much as make it an object with them to be united to Christ.

How fatal the influence of that disbelief which thus blinds the mind, and hardens the heart; and, by resisting the truth, forfeits and repels all the blessings the word is meant to convey! What will it avail you to have pleased yourselves with an assumption that God will be merciful to you, if you be of those whom he declares he will con-

demn; with a persuasion that you shall be happy hereafter, if you be of those whom his word consigns to destruction?—to have argued yourselves into a persuasion that you are righteous, if you are indeed perverse; that you give Christ all the honour that is necessary, if you, indeed, refuse to take up the cross and follow him? "What if some do not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God of no effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar." Yes, his threatenings shall be fulfilled, no less than his promises; and unbelief, instead of averting them, only renders them the more sure and tremendous. "See, then, that ye refuse not him that speaketh."

On the other hand, how manifestly necessary is faith! Many regard the precepts that require us to believe as of an arbitrary nature; and, confessing that they are binding as coming from God, they do not see that they have any foundation in the nature of things. They discover a natural obligation in the duties of benevolence, integrity, truth, but nothing of that kind in faith. A little consideration will correct this idea. For when God condescends to give us a revelation of his character and will, stamped with the seals of divine authority, does it not instantly become our duty to examine this revelation with reverence, to submit to its decisions, and, putting away our preconceived opinions, when they are found to be inconsistent with it, to honour it as the standard of truth, and the rule of duty—in short, to yield up our understandings to the guidance of heavenly wisdom, and our souls to the government of divine authority? Now what is this but faith? Faith is the reception of the truth as coming from God—the embracing it in its application to ourselves. But to prove its necessity, it is enough to appeal to the Scriptures, where it is expressly asserted, that "he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned;" where, also, to show the spiritual insensibility of those who believe not, they are represented as "having eyes but not seeing, ears but not hearing." This expression, as well as that of the text, conveys the idea that faith in reference to spiritual things, corresponds with sight in reference to external objects; and this image suggests a lively illustration of its necessity; for, as it is of no avail to place before a man destitute of sight the most captivating or the most alarming objects, the brightest images of happiness or the blackest scenes of misery; so, it avails not to place before one destitute of faith, the impressive representations of the Gospel, whether relating to the jus-

tice or the mercy of God, the guilt of sin, or the grace of Christ, the glories of heaven, or the terrors of hell. But faith brings all the truths of Scripture, with all the powerful and affecting motives involved in them, to bear upon the soul; so that, if

there be any thing in the word fitted to animate, or awaken, or comfort, it gives us the benefit of it. Thus "God purifies the heart by it," and it "works by love," and "overcomes the world."

CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THE EVENING OF SUNDAY, 15TH SEPTEMBER, 1833,
IN THE UNITED SECESSION CHURCH, BRISTO STREET, EDINBURGH, IN BEHALF OF
THE HIGHLAND MISSIONARY SOCIETY,

By the Rev. D. YOUNG,

One of the Ministers of the United Secession Church, Perth.

'Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.'—ECCLES. xi. 2.

It has been remarked that Solomon, more perhaps than any other inspired writer, was in the habit of advising those who had much to make a fair and generous distribution to those who had little. In many parts of his writings, he is equally decided in urging the duty of husbanding our wealth, that we may thereby have the means of ministering relief to those who are necessitous. The passage before us is an instance of this. In the verse immediately before the text, he says, "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days," as if he had said, "As the prudent husbandman spares from the use of his family a portion of his bread-corn, and casts it upon the waters, or sows it in the low-lying and well-watered and fertile places of the earth, and receives it again in rich accumulation after many days, so shall it be with you, if you be judiciously liberal in giving up your earthly substance to the children of want and wretchedness." What you thus spare is not lost. It is sown sown in a good soil, from which you may expect an ample return under the management of a gracious Providence. It is sown not only that it may be useful to others, but also that it may be useful to you; not that in every instance you may be repaid in kind, but that if you hold yourselves stewards of the bounty of Providence, and give from enlightened religious principle, you and they who depend on you shall not be losers, but gainers in the end. Such seems to be the meaning of the first verse of the chapter, and the words of the text follow out precisely the same idea, and gather around it a new class of interesting associations. "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight: for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth." In this text, there is a duty enjoined, and a motive specified for enforcing the duty.

In the first place, we have a duty enjoined: "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight." The characteristic of this, you perceive at once, is giving. Make a frank and deliberate surrender of that which is your own, if God, in his providence, seem to require it. Make up your minds to part with it for ever, that it may be applied to the benefit of others. But let this be a deed of the heart, and let this be the very circumstance from which you feel a positive personal satisfaction. If you do it grudgingly, regretting that circumstances should force you to this, and with your hearts cleaving to the thing given after it is gone, you destroy the very nature of the deed—it is no more giving; because, in this way, it is not a deed of the heart—it is not a deed of the man, but the slow, reluctant, extorted tribute which selfishness pays, it may be, to common decency. Now, I call that share of this giving, which belongs to every one of us, by the name of *duty*—and I do so because, while it is a matter of free choice, while this is essential to its very existence as giving, it is, at the same time, a thing due from us to God and to society, in the circumstances in which we are placed; and if we do not pay it, we are, in point of fact, debtors to God and his Son. If we do not pay it while we are solvent, or able to pay, we dishonour God, and defraud society. If you ask why we speak thus about so free a thing as giving, I answer, every one of us, from the king on the throne to the beggar on the dunghill, is no more than a steward of what he possesses. If God has given me riches, or the power of productive industry, I am accountable to God for the one and for the other. I am accountable for a portion I bestow on myself, or on my family in ordinary situations, and especially for a portion I bestow upon

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religion, inasmuch as religion is the great concern about which, in every relation, we should chiefly occupy our minds. Thus you see that the essence of duty, spoken of in this passage, is giving; but it is giving out of a willing mind; it is giving as an expression of the heart; it is giving from a sense of duty to God, who gives us all things, and to whom we are accountable for all things.

Now, there are three things in giving, which the text very clearly points out to us. In the first place, it should be liberal. God has not precisely defined the portion of a man's wealth or income which ought to be devoted to purposes of benevolence; and there are two very obvious reasons why he has not done this. One is, that the proportion varies according to the circumstances in which we are placed; the other, that scope may be given to the operation of general esteem, or that we may have the *honour and satisfaction* of exercising distinguished beneficence. "Give a portion," says the text, "to seven, and also to eight." Taken literally, we might explain it thus: If seven cases of real necessity shall press upon you in mixed society, give to them all according to your ability; and if, immediately after this, an additional number should present themselves, give to these also, if you have the power. The meaning is, Let not what you have given already be any excuse for the future, but let your liberality rise as circumstances require; as, in times of peculiar pressure, when the ordinary streams of beneficence are dried up, and when the claims upon your bounty are numerous and strong. In such cases, be not stinted, but let your bounty increase as necessity increases. And what is this but copying after the example of Him who gives us all things richly to enjoy, and who has pledged himself to supply our wants? Nay, this rising of the disposition to God, in correspondence with necessity, is inseparable from the very spirit of the duty here enjoined; and, as has been said, the text has not defined the precise amount of our giving in any particular instance, just that we may have an opportunity of cultivating in our hearts the true principle of liberality. Now, think of the good that is done—I say not to others, but to our own christian character, when this is made a matter not of fits and starts, but of a regular, steady religious frame of mind. How much selfishness is quenched when this is the case; how much envious feeling is mortified; how much confidence in God is called into action; how much godliness is shed around

the characters of the followers of Jesus Christ! But if a man shall take the opposite course—if he shall say, Because God has not fixed what I am to give in any particular instance, I will take care of myself—what is the effect? Why, by this very resolution the man's selfishness is manifested. But, again, envious feeling is quickened within him. If a man refuse to give what he ought to any object of beneficence, he will forthwith begin to think ill of that object, and, in a very little time, to speak ill of it. This is precisely the way in which human nature operates. As far as that object is concerned, his bowels of compassion are shut up. If he be a professing Christian, his finest feelings of humanity in that department are seared as it were; and whether he think so or not, his whole moral nature is positively debased. He may act from mistake; but if heact from selfishness, this is the amount of the injury he inflicts on his own person.

But the second thing the text says about this duty, is, that it ought to be regulated by enlightened christian discretion. We are to give to seven, and also to eight; that is, we are to regulate our giving by the number, and the general urgency of the cases presented to us. Injudicious giving is a dead loss to the giver, and it is very seldom a gain to the receiver. We need much wisdom to guide us in this matter, in the present state of human society. Our own persons and families have undoubtedly the first claim upon us; for "he that provideth not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." But this, which stands primary, is very apt to lead to an opposite extreme. Many a man who is careless about himself, becomes an absolute miser for the sake of his family; and in this way it is that his hand is stinted in circumstances very peculiar. I envy not the man who injure his family by doing good to others; but I venerate the man who is duly concerned for the temporal welfare of his family, while he suffers not this to diminish his just concern for others. And here let me guard you against an error that is not uncommon. It is not the secular aggrandizement of our families which ought to be permitted to interfere with our beneficence for others. What is really and especially useful for them, we ought to provide if they have it not; but if we form extravagant pictures for their secular elevation, we do that which will involve us in much sin, and which is sure to interfere with the proper duty spoken of in the text.

Next to our families, the poor, and especially the poor of our own circle and neighbourhood, are to be attended to. The claims of these are in no case to be neglected; and the man who can be happy amid his domestic beneficence, while there are extreme cases of necessity very near him which he has no desire to relieve, is an absolute disgrace to human nature. He may be a man of veracity, a man of general good character; but if he do not feel the importance of the duty of providing for those who are in necessity around him, that man's heart has something seriously bad in it, and the very nearness of the call constitutes a special call on him to seek it out, and judiciously to relieve it.

Religion has, however, the highest claim upon him. It is true, religion is not always first in point of time in its demand upon us; for if we meet a man who is famishing for lack of knowledge, while at the same time he is perishing for want, our first duty is to supply him with food, and we have opportunity of administering afterwards to his spiritual defects. But it is secondary to a man being kept alive *only*; because a man must be kept alive in this world in order to be the object of religion: so our giving will require to be held in subserviency to the giving of the Gospel, otherwise it is neither enlightened nor wise. The Gospel is the bread of life, the truly adequate substance to man; and give a man what we may, relieve him to what extent we please, if we give him not this, we trifle with his real wants. "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." But in order that our giving may be judicious, we must not on any account permit ourselves to give to that which is positively sinful. To do this is to commit a heinous offence against the duty of giving; and there are calls upon us in this department of sometimes equivocal kinds, which ought to be seriously considered. The Christian must take care not to recognise devices in giving, which are inconsistent with his christian character. A charity ball, for example, may be attended by a child of this world, and he may think it a very fine way of communicating a portion of his substance to supply the poor; but a Christian, under the influence of the Gospel, will never make such a thing the medium of his beneficence. He feels that such a thing is inconsistent with the purity, with the sacredness, with the true spirituality of the duty he is called on to perform. Nay, further, we are required not to diminish our power of giving, by casting away our substance extravagantly in matters of mere

amusement, or of giving that money to one which deprives us of the means of giving to others who may be more meritorious. We must attend to the instruction in the text; we are to "give a portion to seven, and also to eight." A great many imagine that giving is quite an easy thing, if they have the means—that if there be just a certain portion of their property they have made up their minds to part with, it is easy throwing it away:—and so it is; but throwing it away is no more charity than hoarding it. In a matter of this kind, a man of sense and piety will find much inquiry, much reflection necessary, and will find that he is not making a proper use of what he perhaps freely gives away, unless he connect the act of giving with the exercise of reflection. But the grand means of regulating this duty is, drinking fully, deeply of the spirit of the Gospel. It is this which gives a man a right to judge, and leads him to an enlightened understanding in the duty of giving. When extolling the beneficence of the Church of Macedonia, Paul said, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might become rich." "Ye know," he said, "ye have experience of it, and this is made to abound within you; ye have been exemplary in this matter, because ye have drunk deep into the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In the second place, we see that the text specifies a motive for enforcing this duty, and that motive is, "Thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth;" as if the wise man had said, Your time, your power of good-doing in this world is exceedingly precarious. You know not how long it may last, and you should, therefore, without a moment's delay, "Work while it is day, for the night cometh in which no man can work." Judicious beneficence is the grand insurance of the wealth a man at present possesses. What is converted into positive good-doing is secured; but what a man hoards to the neglect of his fellows, he leaves behind in danger of harm: what he loses of his own for the good of others, is like food taken into the stomach and incorporated with the body, and thus applied to its proper use; but what he sinfully retains is something unappropriated, and is in danger of being destroyed, as far as his power over it is concerned. Moreover, he who thus retains what is not his own, has reason to expect that it may corrupt his whole soul. These statements are not only true, because they seem to be drawn from

inspiration, but they are often verified in the affairs of human life. Who among us does not know, that the man who is strong, and active, and skilful, and possesses great powers of productive industry, may speedily become weak and helpless as a child ; or, that the man who is noted for wealth, may in a few days, and perhaps at a time when he least expects it, be made to sink into the deepest poverty ? Ungodliness and want of economy may have brought this upon him, and the inadmissible folly of not a few is the true reason why they are beggars ; but there is more truth than this in the history of human life. The man who is prudent, and active, and industrious, who knows well the field of enterprise in which he has embarked, and whose success for a long time may have greatly exceeded expectation, may be overthrown in an evil hour, and forced to exclaim in his helplessness, " Naked came I into the world, and naked must I return from it." When such persons are at the very height of their prosperity they know not what evil is to come upon them ; they may suspect nothing but good, and may say to themselves, " To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." But if they calculate thus they indicate a decided want of wisdom. If they appropriate the fruits of their prosperity, as they come, to the advancement of society and virtue, they put this much of it free from hazard. But if they say, as many say, We will be selfish now, but liberal when our fortune is made, they leave all exposed to danger ; and when their day of adversity comes it sweeps every thing away. Delay is most hazardous ; for what you have the power to do to-day you may not have the power to do to-morrow. It is not what you have to give in future, but what you have at present that God requires as service. A man may promise fair for the time to come ; but at that moment it may be that the time to come is gone ; and, therefore, he has no right to make such promises. There is a present amount of capability, a present call to give, and this is the point religiously to be considered.

But these words seem to say something more than this ; that the man who will not give, although he has the power, not only puts his wealth to hazard, but is in danger of provoking the great God to send a canker into all he possesses, which may eat it up before his eyes, and leave him entirely destitute—thus showing him at once his sin and his punishment ; or to send a canker into his soul, and make his wealth the occasion of rendering his family godless and graceless.

How often has it happened that the hoarded riches of a worldly man have proved the means of profligacy to his family ; and how often has the observer traced this to the fact, that the parent was determined to make them rich, while he totally disregarded their religious training ? Does not this present to us the force of the truth of the wise man ? They that will be rich fall first into temptation ; then, being caught by the temptation, they fall into a snare ; and this snare leads them to many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. Thy wealth is only matter of satisfaction, in so far as thy conscience, enlightened by the Word of God, says that thou hast honestly devoted it to purposes of religious and common beneficence, according to the amount of means God has put in thy power.

But it is to be remarked here, that the very thing God specifies as a motive in giving, is specified by men of the world as a motive for not giving. " Give a portion to seven, and also to eight ; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth." They say we cannot give, for we know not what evil shall be upon the earth. Such men may say, I might share a little at present, but it is hard to say what I shall need ; the future is dubious, and, were it known, I might, in giving away just now be chargeable with sinful indifference to the temporal well-being of my family. Here are two opposite practical arguments drawn from one and the same principle. The principle is—we know not what shall be upon the earth. From this principle God argues liberality ; and, from the very same, the persons referred to argue parsimony. But it is a very important circumstance to inquire, what is the cause of the difference ? Now, the cause of the difference is a false estimate, on the part of man, of his own interest. In the prospect of evil man cleaves to his own providence, and will not trust the providence of Jehovah : he does not see that the best way of securing himself in time against the positive evil of to-morrow, is doing good to society to-day. And why does he not see this ? His mind is governed by a principle of selfishness. This is the root of the whole matter—that selfishness has become inveterate by indulgence ; it has been strengthened by general example, for there are many " examples of it." The man mistakes the force of avarice for the virtue of necessity ; he cuts himself off from society, and resolves to sail down the stream of life, not in company, but alone. But mark him : the in-

stant he is in necessity, he looks for connexion; again he wishes for solitude no more. Do you ask, What is the cure for this evil? I answer, the Gospel of the grace of God. Sin has made man the enemy of God, and in this way men have become the enemies of one another; but the Gospel produces love of God, and in this way restores the principle of enlightened benevolence. Sin, in fact, has broken up the social economy, but the Gospel gathers together and reunites the scattered fragments of it. The Gospel produces in the soul a principle of piety to God, and thus leads the man to be truly liberal. Shall I be told that there is humanity apart from Christianity. I know that there are wild figs in the wilderness; but, as wild figs are not genuine, that humanity which exists apart from Christianity is a spurious humanity. It is not possible to love man as man ought to be loved, unless our apparent concern be for the soul of man. And where is the being who is chiefly concerned for the soul of his brother, but the man who is a believer in Jesus Christ? Without enlarging here, there is one fact which I think comes out of the whole subject—and it is this: that the support and diffusion of the Gospel are the highest possible uses we can make of our worldly substance. What blessed effects are produced on society where the Gospel is believed! Where this is the case, the love of man towards his fellow-creature is freely exercised; ungodliness is denied; and a life of sobriety and righteousness in this world is the consequence. Where this is the case human society is renovated; poverty, which to so great an extent is the offspring of crime, is diminished; and fellow-feeling is conducted into a medium of pure delight. Oh, how much pain does fellow-feeling produce to a man in a corrupt state of society! But when the Gospel takes its proper effect, the feeling connected with sympathy is pure and satisfactory. Now the Gospel produces this change, and, whenever it is believed and practised, such a change must follow: giving for the diffusion of the Gospel is, therefore, best, because it delivers man from moral wretchedness. There is a cloud, a shade, connected with man's misconduct ever since the fall, and from all this the Gospel delivers the souls of men. But this is not all; the Gospel brings life and immortality to light. It not only secures the sunshine of heavenly prosperity to settle on society, but dissipates the clouds which overhang futurity, and opens a vista by which

to descry the glories of the celestial region. To contribute, then, for the Gospel is the noblest deed to which man can put his hand. The continuation of monarchies or of political institutions, however ancient or venerable, is a trifle to this. It is comparatively of no moment how a man be governed for a few days while here, if his eternal interests be neglected: "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" These are not the sentiments of the inveterate worldling—these are not the sentiments of the crafty and the selfish, but of every child of Adam whom God has brought to see his real condition of guilt and danger. It is the cry of every such child of Adam, a cry which drowns every other—"What shall I do to be saved?" Until this cry is put forth in earnest, we are not suffering our minds to arrive at the sublime of our existence.

Now, the object for which we are met together this evening, is one of the departments for the diffusion of the Gospel; and, having laid these things generally before your minds, I shall advert to that specific object very shortly, giving you, in some measure, an opportunity of judging of it for yourselves. The Society, on account of which we are assembled, is called "The Highland Missionary Society." Its scene of operations is the Western Highlands. It has been in operation for a considerable number of years, and has been productive of substantial benefit. The object is to find out and employ studious-minded and pious individuals who can use the language, and to instruct and support these individuals, in taking such measures, as circumstances may dictate, for instilling into the minds of their illiterate countrymen the knowledge of our common salvation. Not long ago, there were employed no fewer than fourteen; but the funds are so much diminished, that, greatly against the will of the Directors, they have been obliged to reduce the number of their agents from fourteen to ten. I cannot believe but that, when the claims of the Society are properly considered, this reduction in the number of its agents will not require to be of long standing. It is a Society not imposing or ostentatious in its objects, but simple, direct, and efficient.

The Rev. Gentleman then proceeded to read certain extracts illustrative of the Society's proceedings, after which a collection was made in its behalf.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 7TH DECEMBER, 1833.

No. 89.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN BROWN, D.D., Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. GEORGE CRAIG, Glasgow.

Price 2

**THE HISTORY OF LOT'S WIFE, AND ITS BEARING ON OUR
RELIGIOUS INTERESTS AND DUTIES;**

**A SERMON PREACHED IN THE UNITED SECESSION CHURCH, LEITH LINKS, ON THE
AFTERNOON OF THURSDAY, 17TH OCTOBER, 1833,**

By the Rev. JOHN BROWN, D.D.,

Minister of the United Secession Church, Broughton Street, Edinburgh,

*“But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.”—
GEN. xix. 26. “Remember Lot’s wife.”—LUKE xvii. 32.*

ALL events are God’s works, all Scripture is God’s Word, and there is a striking analogy between the works and the word of God. All God’s words are equally divine, all God’s words are not equally important; but all God’s words are useful, and calculated to serve an important purpose. The meanest insect and the highest angel are equally the works of God. In this point of view, they stand precisely on a level, but not in reference to the importance of the purposes which they respectively serve in God’s world. The death of a fly and the destruction of an empire are equally the works of God. They both of them come from Him, “who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working;” but the one event is by no means so important as the other. The statement that forms the first part of our text, that Lot’s wife “looked back from behind him, and became a pillar of salt,” is as equally a divine statement, as that Christ Jesus died for our sins, and was raised again the third day; but the one declaration is, surely, by no means so important as the other. The command, “Remember Lot’s wife,” is as equally a command of God, as “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;” but surely the one is not so important as the other. While, then, there is a great difference as to the importance of God’s works

and words, though equally divine, all God’s works and all God’s words serve, at the same time, a useful and an important purpose. The Bible has sometimes been represented as a mine of diamonds, and the comparison is apt and instructive. In this mine there are to be found gems remarkable for their size, splendour and value. Some of these are found polished in their native mine, and others of them are found surrounded by a crust which requires to be cautiously removed by the hand of art. There are to be found gems, the size, and beauty, and value, of which are at once palpably obvious to every spiritual eye—nay, the very rubbish of such a mine, if I may use the expression, is valuable. To drop the figure, there are in Scripture numerous passages that are obviously immensely important; and nobody can read them without at once feeling this; but there are many other passages, the importance and value of which are not at first sight perceptible, and hence the reader may rashly find fault with the wisdom of Him who gave such passages a place in a book intended for permanent and universal instruction, while, in reality, it is his own indolence, ignorance, or inconsideration, that is solely to blame. The prayerful reader of the Bible will find no passage which he cannot easily perceive may answer some very important purpose.

and will meet with very few passages, indeed, from which he cannot, by a little reflection, find for himself lessons of important moral and religious wisdom. To be able to make use of the less exuberant passages of Scripture, is a very important attainment for every Christian. This is a faculty to be attained by diligent exercise ; and a very important secondary object in a minister, is the training his people to the habit of making a good use of such passages, guarding them against that fondness for allegory which converts the plainest passages into the wildest dreams of the imagination, and, at the same time, showing them how replete even the most apparently trifling passages, if I may use the expression, are with religious and moral instruction. A conviction of the truth and importance of the remark I have made, is one of the reasons why I have chosen the two passages of Scripture I have read as the subject of discourse this afternoon. My purpose is, briefly to inquire what may be some of those circumstances, in the history of Lot's wife, to which our Lord probably referred, when he called on us to remember her, and to show what bearing these circumstances have on our religious interests and duties. Now we know very little about Lot's wife. The whole of our information may be summed up in two statements : that she was Lot's wife ; and after having left Sodom with her husband and her daughters, under the guidance of angels, and gone a certain way to the city of refuge, she looked back, and became immediately a pillar of salt. Limited, however, as our knowledge of her is, it seems quite plain that she was a woman possessed of distinguished privileges ; that she was partially obedient to the divine command ; that she was guilty of a great sin ; and that she was visited with a very tremendous punishment. Now, I think it very probable that our Lord referred to one or other, or all of these circumstances, when he said, "Remember Lot's wife," and I apprehend that a consideration of all these circumstances will be found to have a direct and important bearing on our religious duties. Let us then turn our attention for a little to the privileges, the obedience, the sin and the punishment, of this unhappy woman.

Lot's wife was distinguished by the enjoyment of certain privileges. The Apostle, in answer to the question, "What advantage hath the Jew, or what profit is there of cir-

cumcision ?" replied, " Much every way ; because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." There were no written oracles of God in the time of Lot's wife ; but she enjoyed the high advantage of a supernatural revelation from heaven, an advantage at that time enjoyed by comparatively few of the human race. When we look abroad on the human race, we find a great portion of them destitute of this invaluable privilege, even in our own age. When God first made man, he made him in his own image, and a part of that image consisted in knowledge. Man fell, it is true ; that was man's fault. After God had put our first father in possession of such knowledge of himself, as, if understood and believed by his posterity, would have made them all happy, that knowledge was nearly lost in the world ; but, in his great mercy, he gave a new revelation of himself, through the second father of the human race ; and that knowledge, if understood and believed, will make men holy and happy too. He chose a particular family to be the depositaries of his will, to preserve it from being lost till the appointed period, when he, in reference to whom the great promise was made, should make his appearance. Now, this was the state of things when Lot's wife lived. Her husband was Abraham's nephew. We have every reason to believe, notwithstanding the blemishes that attached themselves to Lot's character, that he was really a good man. When Abraham, at the command of Jehovah, left his native land, Lot went along with him ; and it is difficult to conceive what, but a religious motive, could have induced him to do so. Indeed, we are not left to conjecture as to his character ; for the New Testament tells us that Lot was a righteous man, whose regenerated mind was habitually vexed by the profligate behaviour of the ungodly of his day. It is a great privilege to enjoy divine revelation at any time, but particularly at a time when so few enjoyed it. It was a great blessing to be an inmate of a religious family, when so few religious families existed. It was a great matter to be the wife of a religious man, when religious men were so scarce as in the days of Lot. Now Lot's wife had these advantages. She was a member of a religious family, and the wife of a godly man. But this was not all ; for she was placed in those external circumstances, which certainly removed many obstacles out of the way to the cultivation of

religious feelings, and the performance of religious duties. Neglect of religion in any is inexcusable, but less so, to a certain extent at least, in some, than in others. For example, a person whose mind is constantly and necessarily racked with anxiety about the temporal interests of his family, has but little time to spend on religion ; and his criminality in the partial neglect of it is not so great as that of those who are placed in circumstances in which they can command the leisure necessary for the cultivation of religious feelings, and the performance of religious duties. This woman was also blessed with occasional intercourse with angelic beings. We know of one instance in which she had the happiness of entertaining two celestial visitants ; and it is not improbable that she might have had the same honour and advantage repeatedly in the course of her life. Another privilege she enjoyed, when a fearful destruction was impending the city in which she dwelt, was her being warned of the danger, and instructed in the way in which she might escape from it.

These were *her* privileges—now reflect on your *own*. You have privileges still more valuable ; you are enjoying the advantages of supernatural revelation, and in a far more important form than Lot's wife. You are all members, I hope, of religious families, and are enjoying the invaluable advantages of domestic instruction. You have not, like Lot's wife, had sensible intercourse with angels, but you enjoy far higher privileges. The kind of intercourse you may have with God and his Son, by means of his Word and Spirit, is a blessing incomparably superior to the sensible ministry of angels. And you have all been warned of your danger, and have had very plainly set before you the way of salvation. You have all been told of the wrath to come, and urged to flee from it. You have all been told of the man Christ Jesus, and urged to flee to him, and to lay hold of the hope set before you in the Gospel. Now remember Lot's wife, when thinking of your privileges and hers, and reflect that privileges are not a sure ground of security or confidence. The Jews said, "We have Abraham to our father ;" but the axe was even then at the root of the tree, and the tree was cut down. Lot's wife had many privileges, and yet she was involved in a fearful punishment. Your privileges, however numerous, however valuable, do not secure you ; nay,

in one point of view, your enjoying them renders you the less secure. The history of Lot's wife suggests the reflection, that while privileges are no secure ground of confidence, they are the sources of responsibility ; for from him to whom much is given, much shall be required. Every privilege brings along with it responsibility ; and, oh ! how heavy is the responsibility under which every one of us is placed ! How aggravated must be our ruin, if we are ruined on the principle, that it shall be more tolerable with Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for Capernaum, which had been privileged to see such mighty works !

Lot's wife was distinguished, not merely by the possession of distinguished privileges, but also by a partial obedience. As I have already stated, our materials for her history are scanty ; but the charity that thinketh no evil, and which, in the absence of every thing like evidence against a person, is disposed to believe every thing in his favour, would lead us to suppose that the general behaviour and character of Lot's wife corresponded to her privileges. But we ground this on the express declaration of the sacred historian. She went so far on her way to the place of refuge ; she did not conduct herself as her ungodly sons-in-law did ; she did not mock the angelic message ; indeed, in the early part of her history, she seems to have behaved better than her husband. Lot, we are told, lingered ; but the Lord was merciful to him, and brought him out of the city by the instrumentality of the angels. His wife left Sodom along with her husband and her two daughters under the same guidance, and was proceeding onward to the appointed place ; and it was while thus engaged that she looked back and violated the divine command. Her obedience was partial : she went so far, but she did not go far enough, and her going so far was thus of no advantage to her. Now, there are two questions that naturally suggest themselves here to every thinking man's mind, when he remembers the partial obedience of Lot's wife. The one is, Have I gone so far as Lot's wife ? I am afraid that there are people here who have not gone so far ; people who have frequently had the guilt and danger of their conduct laid before them, and yet continue in sin—who are asleep in carnal security, and joined to their idols. What is to become of you if you see a person who has acted a wiser

and a better part than you have done, perish after all? If Lot's wife perished though she came out of Sodom and went so far on her way, is not your perdition, as it were, doubly sure by continuing in the city doomed to destruction? But the second question is equally important. If I have gone so far as Lot's wife, is there any certainty that I shall go farther? I believe the greater part here have gone as far. There are comparatively few, I suppose, hearing me, who have not been affected by the declarations of God's Word, who are not grieved at the guilt and danger of those who have violated the divine law, and who, under the influence of this principle, have not abstained from a number of sins and performed a number of duties. But it is a most important question, Have we any rational security that we shall go farther—for if we go no farther, we shall undoubtedly perish? It is a matter of great importance to know what it was that prevented Lot's wife from going onward and being secure. She acted under the impulse of an external motive, and her obedience failed. Now, the great body of those distinguished by partial obedience to the divine law, are acting under the influence of external motives, such as fear, the force of education; and there are many other motives which produce a great deal of that decent conformity to many of the requisitions of God's law, but which serve nothing in the way of securing the everlasting salvation of the individual. Had Lot's wife been actuated by a real regard to the authority of God, she would not have looked behind her. Where obedience originates in the operation of external motives, it may be expected to cease when these motives cease to operate; and it is in this way that we are to account for the strange manifestations of character that are so often exhibited. There is a man, perhaps, who has been very honest for a great part of his life, because he could not act otherwise without exposing himself and running considerable hazard. Place him in different circumstances, and he will act differently, which shows that there is no principle of real honesty in his heart. How often have we seen a child conducting himself tolerably well when under restraint, but when let loose from it running to very wicked courses? Here merely external motives may continue to operate during the whole course of a man's life. If fear had continued to operate with this poor woman for a little longer, she might have gone down

to her grave without ever having been discovered to be unsound in her profession; and how many are there who are little aware themselves of the unsoundness of their profession, till it is made manifest to them before the judgment-seat! Have we any rational ground to think, that having gone so far we will go farther; that we will persevere in the profession and in the obedience of the truth as it is in Jesus? My brethren, I do not know any thing that can secure us except this. If the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost—if we have been made to know and believe the truth, and through its influence to love God and hate sin, then there will be in us a well of living water which shall spring up to everlasting life. Let us not be satisfied with having a name to live, while we may be in reality dead. Let us all take heed that we be really alive to God through Christ Jesus our Lord.

In the third place, I go on to remark, that Lot's wife was distinguished not merely by her privileges and her partial obedience, but by the commission of a deadly sin. We have an account of her sin in the following words:—"His wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." You will notice, that in the command of God given by the angels, this was particularly enjoined, that there was to be no looking behind. "And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain: escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." I have said she was guilty of a heinous sin. Probably some of you may think this very questionable. She was merely looking behind her—it is not said she stood still, far less that she began to move back—she was merely *looking* back; and it may be thought very hard that she could not take a backward glance at the scene where all her possessions were, and all her worldly friends. But this mode of thinking is very impious and childish. It is impious, for it is calling in question the righteousness of the divine conduct in the way she was punished; and it is childish, because it goes upon the principle that external actions have a value in themselves independent of the moral principle which gives rise to them. Look not behind you was just as plainly a part of the divine command as any other portion of it. It is not at all impossible that the poor woman rea-

sioned thus in reference to the divine command:—This looking behind is not of the essence of the thing. If I keep moving onward there is no danger though I should glance back. This is just the way in which many reason on the divine commands. My brethren, when God gives a command, our duty is to do exactly what is bidden us, and exactly in the way in which he has bidden us. If you allow yourselves to reflect a little on the subject, you will see that the sin of Lot's wife was indeed a terrible sin; involving in it the disbelief of the divine declaration, or of the divine authority, or rather involving in it a mixture of both. If she had really believed what God declared, and revered God's authority, she would not have done as she did. Observe, too, that her conduct necessarily implies that her heart was entirely occupied with the love of the world, leading her to look back towards the scene of her former business and her former worldly pursuits. The circumstances in which she was placed were peculiarly calculated to awaken religious fear and gratitude, delivered as she had been from so tremendous a destruction; but there was no fear, no gratitude within her, otherwise she would have manifested it by obedience. When we reflect on the sin of Lot's wife, it shows us how dangerous it is to treat any violation of the divine law as if it were a trifling circumstance. There is no plea that a man so often offers to his own conscience for a violation of the divine law as that it is a little matter. If it is so little a thing, have we so little regard for God's authority that we will not abstain from it? The more trifling the thing is, the greater is the manifestation of the contempt for the divine authority. We ought to recollect that little incidents both form and manifest the character. We should recollect that by far the greater part of the guilt man contracts, is contracted by what people call little matters. Make out an account between God and yourselves; set down all your violations of the divine law, and then sum up the amount. Take two columns, and in one put the great sins, and in the other the trifling sins, and then summing up the two tell me which of the amounts of the two columns is the greatest. I do not think that any great number here are guilty of any very enormous crimes. The great mass of guilt which is accumulating in our houses, and bringing us to the very brink of the pit of perdition, is composed of what we

call at the time very trifling violations of the divine law, if violations of the divine law at all. Trace the mighty river to its source, and you find it in some obscure spring. Carefully reflect on the history of that miserable wretch who, at the gallows, has paid to civil society his life as the debt for the outrages of which he has been guilty against the laws, and you will find that he commenced his career of guilt with little sins. A consideration of the sin of Lot's wife should lead us to reflect on the principle from which it flowed; and I have very little doubt that if you trace the sin of Lot's wife to its principle, you will find that it originated in the love of the world. It was that which induced her to disobey the command of God.

The love of the world has assumed an endless variety of forms. There is a man whose whole heart obviously is in his money, but he pleases himself with the thought that he is not wasting God's gifts. And there is the spendthrift, pleasing himself with the thought that he is only taking a cheerful use of the good things of God's providence. The man, again, whose whole mind is occupied with anxiety about what shall I eat, what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed, pleases himself with the thought that he is doing what can be done to get an honest subsistence. And again, there is the man whose whole mind is occupied about obtaining a high place in the opinion of his fellow-men, who is giving himself credit for the degree of estimation in which he is held by his fellows, in order to his being able to do them good. In this way no great crime is committed, but the man is all the while in danger of being lost. There are some who think it very difficult to understand what is meant by the love of the world. Every man loves the world who allows any thing seen and temporal to be the principal subject of his thoughts, and the principal object of his pursuit. That man belongs to the same class as Lot's wife; there is no command more distinctly announced in the Bible, than, "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." He that loves the world is the enemy of God. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

I remark further, that we should, in remembering the sin of Lot's wife, reflect on its distinguishing character—turning away

from the holy commandment that was given ; and I believe one design of the passage is to teach us to guard against the sin of apostasy. Apostasy, or an open abandonment of the christian profession, is not a very common sin in this country and age, and it is not difficult to account for this : let our circumstances be changed, let persecution arise for the sake of the Word, and we will have enough of it. But though there be not much *open* apostasy, there is a great deal of *real* apostasy. We see a person connecting himself with a christian church, under very favourable circumstances : he has been alarmed, and made to say, " What shall I do to be saved ? " and seems disposed to walk in the good way ; and for a while he seems to go on well, and even to get before some of those who have long made a profession of the truth ; but, by and by, the man, sometimes gradually, and sometimes very rapidly, becomes thoughtless. Perhaps he does not give up attending the church ; perhaps he is to be found in his place at the communion table regularly enough ; but it is quite plain that there is no heart in his religion, that it is a dead thing. Another class of apostates do not openly renounce the christian name, but go farther than the class now mentioned : they get tired of regularly attending the church, and observing the other ordinances of Christianity ; they fall out of church-fellowship, but never, perhaps, committing any gross sin that calls upon the church to pronounce upon them a sentence of formal exclusion. I believe these two species of apostasy to be very common. The declarations of the Bible in regard to apostasy are very plain. " For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it has happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again ; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." And again, " For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. It is a fearful thing to fall into

the hands of the living God." God grant that these passages produce in our minds a holy fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into God's rest, any of us should seem to come short of it. There may be persons that belong to one or other of the two classes I have stated, to whom these declarations, which are well fitted to make their ears to tingle, may seem to convey the idea that their case is perfectly hopeless. Now, that is not the truth. What God says is, that if you *continue* in apostasy, you are undone for ever ; and this is a state from which very few are reclaimed ; but, let the apostate turn and he shall live and not die. " Turn to me ye backsliding children and I will heal you, I will love you freely. Turn ye, turn ye : why will ye die ? "

Lot's wife was distinguished not only by her privileges, and her partial obedience, and her sin, but also by her punishment. Our account of her punishment is very short ; " she looked back, and she became a pillar of salt." The curiosity of interpreters has been much exercised, in order to discover what was the particular nature of this woman's punishment. Some have supposed that, without any material alteration taking place, her dead body was so impregnated with saline particles, that the ordinary tendency of organized matter to run to putrefaction was counteracted, and that she remained a monument for ages of the divine displeasure. Others again suppose that, by divine power, she was actually converted into a pillar of salt, which stood for ages a monument of the displeasure of God at her disobedience. Others again, taking a pillar as a memorial, and a pillar of salt as an enduring memorial, conceive, that all that is meant is, that God, by recording thus the punishment of this woman for the violation of his law, has set her up as an everlasting monument of his displeasure of sin. It is to no purpose for us to waste time in an inquiry of this kind ; we have not the means of understanding the particular nature of the punishment that was inflicted, nor do we know of any particular advantage that would be derived, from having just as minute an account as we could desire. The fact is certain, that she was punished and punished suddenly, and in the midst of her relations, when none of them could do any thing in the way of delivering her ; and we have every reason to fear that her punishment was the commencement of never-ending woe. She died in the very act of sinning,

and hence, we can have no hope of her. Now, when we think of the punishment of this woman, we should reflect, that God is no respecter of persons. We are not to suppose that he had some particular ill-will against Lot's wife, and therefore punished her more severely than others who are found possessed of the same character and having the same sin. People who resemble Lot's wife in sin, must resemble her in punishment. It is not according to the ordinary course of divine providence to punish exactly in the same visible way, but you will find, that all the leading characters are the same. When they are saying peace and safety, then comes destruction, and often suddenly.

Their final punishment will take place in the presence of an assembled world, and all the exertions of relatives, and even of an assembled universe, will be of no avail in saving them from the coming vengeance; and then we know, that the suffering of all who are found finally impenitent and unbeliefing is everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, in that world where "their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." The Lord give you to lay these things to heart. Amen.*

* This discourse was preached without notes; as, indeed, are almost all the discourses of the Dissenting Clergy in Scotland.

ON THE PRIVATE READING AND INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE;

THE ANNUAL SERMON AGAINST THE ERRORS AND CORRUPTIONS OF THE CHURCH OF
ROME, PREACHED IN THE COLLEGE CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON 1ST NOV. 1833,

By the Rev. GEORGE CRAIG,

Glasgow.

"*Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read.*"—ISAIAH xxxiv. 16.

ONE of the chief difficulties attending disputation with Roman Catholics is, to ascertain the exact nature of their creed. In a church where there is so much boasted unity of faith and profession, we should expect that any one of its members might be depended on for a fair account of Popish doctrine, so far as that account went. But the truth is, a society of professing Christians is not in existence, whose members give more diverse and irreconcileable accounts of the very same thing. This, at all events, is the case when they are engaged in controversy with Protestants. What the most learned of their doctors have declared to be Popish doctrine, and attempted to prove by argument, has been flatly and gratuitously contradicted by upstart disputants. What has been enacted by councils, ratified by Popes, and proclaimed throughout Christendom, has, if the safety of their church was conceived to be in danger, been utterly rejected, at least to appearance, and for the time, by her crafty sons. Whether it be from the convenient and accommodating nature of their principles of veracity we know not; this much we know, that let any Romanist be told that such and such is a principle of his church—and if it be so absurd as not to stand examination, he will

either so modify the doctrine and adapt it to the intelligence of the country and times in which he lives, or at once deny that ever it was a doctrine of his Church. How often in these enlightened lands has that been denied to be a doctrine or practice of the Church of Rome, and that too by priests and bishops, which, had it been *so* denied in Italy, Spain, or Portugal, would have called forth the presumptuous anathemas of him who, while he utters them, impiously styles himself Christ's vicar on earth. Who that knows any thing of British popery, and the popery of Popedom, has not remarked how different they are, if not in *reality*, at least in *appearance*. Papal power, saint-worship, penance, and indulgences, are here but the *shadow* of what they are in countries unleavened by Protestantism. Our opponents themselves must allow, that the popery of Glasgow is the popery of Rome exceedingly purified, or, as its own immutability will have it, designedly falsified. All this will be strikingly exemplified, while we attempt to ascertain the views of Romanists with regard to the private reading and interpretation of Scripture—the subject of our present discourse. The Protestant views on this subject, it is scarcely necessary to say, are, that it is the

privilege of every child of Adam to possess and interpret for himself, so far as he can, and according to the best of his judgment, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; and not only so, but that it is a duty binding every one who possesses these, to do his utmost endeavour to communicate them to others.

There are some British Romanists who would seem to go the full length of Protestants in this matter. We say *some*; for on *this*, as on many *other* subjects, they manifest not Catholic unity but Sectarian division.

The following is a declaration made some years ago in a Glasgow newspaper by Bishop Scott of this city. It is extracted from the 30th number of the Protestant. "If it really was a principle of the Roman Catholic Church," says the Bishop, "to deprive her members of the use of the divine Word, by forbidding them to read and search the Scriptures, she would indeed be cruel and unjust. But I can publicly declare, without danger of being contradicted by my brethren, or censured by my superiors, that it is not at present—that it *never was*, a principle of the Catholic Church, that the Scriptures should be withheld from the laity; and there never was any law enacted by the supreme legislative authority in the Catholic Church, by which the reading of the Scriptures was prohibited."

Such is Bishop Scott's opinion on this subject; but that he is at variance both with his fellow-Romanists in Britain, and the more genuine sons of the Church in Ireland and on the continent, and, above all, with the presumptuous arbiters of religious truth and error, the Council of Trent, whose decisions he is bound to receive and maintain, the following will abundantly show. In the year 1824, Pope Leo XII. sent a letter to all the Romish Bishops and Archbishops in Ireland. This letter they translated and accompanied with pastoral instructions to all the Romish clergy and laity in this country. In the Pope's letter, there is the following exhortation:—"Reprove, beseech, be instant in season, and out of season, in all patience and doctrine, that the faithful intrusted to you *adhering strictly to the rules of our congregation of the Index*, be persuaded, that if the Sacred Scriptures be every-where indiscriminately published, more evil than advantage will arise thence." In the pastoral instructions ac-

companying the letter, is the following comment:—"Our holy father (the Pope) recommends to the observance of the faithful a rule of the congregation of the Index, which prohibits the perusal of the Sacred Scriptures in the vulgar tongue, without the sanction of the competent authorities. His Holiness wisely remarks, that more evil than good is found to result from the indiscriminate perusal of them, on account of the malice or infirmity of men. *In this sentiment of our head and chief we fully concur.*" We may here state the opinion of the great Popish champion, Dr. Doyle, on this subject, which is emphatically given in his answer to the following question. "Would you, (the Doctor was asked,) would you allow any of the peasantry of Ireland who might persevere in reading the Bible in the authorized version, after having been prohibited by your clergy, to be received to the sacrament? *Certainly I would not,*" answered Dr. Doyle, when upon oath. Such are the sentiments concerning the perusal of Scripture by the laity, entertained by the Pope, the Irish Bishops and Archbishops, and by Dr. Doyle; and that the Pope, Bishops, Archbishops, and Dr. Doyle, are popishly right, and Bishop Scott in the wrong, we shall now show from the decision of the Council of Trent. "Seeing," says the fourth of its decisions concerning prohibited books, "seeing it is manifest from experience, that if the Holy Bible be permitted to be read every-where without difference in the vulgar tongue, more harm than good results thence by the rashness of men, let it therefore be at the pleasure of the bishop or inquisitor, with the advice of the parish clerk or confessor, to grant the reading of the Bible, translated by Catholic authors, to those who, in *their* opinion, will receive thereby an increase of faith and piety. This license let them have in writing; and whoever shall *presume to read or possess* such Bibles, without permission, cannot receive absolution of sins till he has returned them to the ordinary. But all booksellers who may sell, or in any other manner supply Bibles, written in the vulgar dialect, to any person not possessed of the aforesaid license, shall forfeit the price of the books, to be applied to sacred purposes by the Bishop, and submit to other punishment at the will of the said Bishop, according to the nature and degree of their fault. But let no one buy or read these

Bibles without the permission of their pastor."

All this, while it convicts Bishop Scott either of culpable ignorance or wilful falsification, gives us a clear idea of Popish aversion to scripture knowledge in the laity. But the Romanist will perhaps contend that this is not absolute disallowance of Scripture among the laity; for there is a particular description of individuals who are not denied the use of the Bible. We grant that the perusal of the sacred record is not, in every instance, anathematized by the Romish Church; yet we maintain, that Popish disallowance of the study of Scripture is virtually and essentially absolute. For what are the conditions on which sinners are allowed to hear what God has revealed to them? Why, the surrender of that which alone can make the reading of the Bible, as the Bible, of any use to them—even the surrender of their own judgment. But hear what one of their own approved authors (Mr. Gother) says:—"A true Romanist never presumes, on his own private sentiments, however seemingly grounded on reason and Scripture, to believe or preach any new doctrine opposite to the belief of the Church; but as he received from her the book, so also to receive from her the sense of the book." Nay, hear the Council of Trent in their decree concerning the use of the sacred Books:—"Besides," says that decree, "for restraining petulant wits, it decrees, that no man, leaning to his own understanding in matters of faith and morals pertaining to edification of the Christian doctrine, twisting the holy Scriptures to their own sense, *dare* interpret the Holy Scriptures contrary to the sense that the holy Mother Church (to whom it belongs to judge of the *true* sense of the holy Scriptures) hath holden and does hold, or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers, though these interpretations are never intended to be published." Mark these words, "though these interpretations are never intended to be published." No man, it seems, is to dare interpret Scripture contrary to the sense that the Holy Mother Church hath holden and does hold, or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers, and these interpretations are never intended to be published; that is, we are not to interpret Scripture, except after the manner of certain individuals; and yet we are not to have the means of knowing who they are, or what their manner of interpretation is. What an insult is this, my friends, to every understanding, even the weakest and most blinded! Gravely to decree, that we shall take the sense of Scripture from the Church and Fathers, and yet neither to tell us who the Church and Fathers are, (a thing, by the way, which they cannot do,) nor even permit us to know what their sense of Scripture is—what is this but solemn mockery, an insolent disregard of man's dignity as a rational being? Nay, more, still to insist in the face of such a decree, that

between depriving a person of a thing, and depriving him of the means of appreciating and enjoying that thing? If we give the letter and withhold the sense, is it not mockery to say, we give the Bible? A priest-sanctioned reader of Scripture can never be assured of the truth of what it declares, except in so far as he is assured of the truth of what the Church, which authoritatively imposes its meaning, declares; so that it is not the Bible he believes, but the Church: the Church takes the place of the Bible, and the reading of the Bible becomes merely the reading of the decisions of the Church in Bible language. Before Scripture can be read as Scripture, it must be disengaged of all authoritative interpretation, and be allowed to impart its own meaning. In so far as this is not the case, it ceases to be Scripture. The Church of Rome, in those few instances, in which she permits the Scriptures to be read by the laity, imposes an authoritative sense; so that, virtually and essentially, her prohibition is absolute. But, again, my friends, observe what follows:—The Council of Trent has decreed, "that no man dare interpret the Scriptures contrary to the sense that the holy Mother Church hath holden and does hold, or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers, though these interpretations are never intended to be published." Mark these words, "though these interpretations are never intended to be published." No man, it seems, is to dare interpret Scripture contrary to the sense that the Holy Mother Church hath holden and does hold, or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers, and these interpretations are never intended to be published; that is, we are not to interpret Scripture, except after the manner of certain individuals; and yet we are not to have the means of knowing who they are, or what their manner of interpretation is. What an insult is this, my friends, to every understanding, even the weakest and most blinded! Gravely to decree, that we shall take the sense of Scripture from the Church and Fathers, and yet neither to tell us who the Church and Fathers are, (a thing, by the way, which they cannot do,) nor even permit us to know what their sense of Scripture is—what is this but solemn mockery, an insolent disregard of man's dignity as a rational being? Nay, more, still to insist in the face of such a decree, that

Romanists are allowed to peruse Scripture as Scripture, what is it but either stupidity or dishonesty in themselves, and insolence towards their opponents? If to prohibit the *reading* and *understanding* of Scripture, except according to certain interpretations, which are unknown and not intended to be published, do not amount to *absolute* prohibition, *nothing* will.

We have thus, we think, established the position, that Popish prohibition virtually amounts to *absolute* prohibition. But lest any Romanist should be unwilling to believe such *impiety* and daring presumption of his Church, we shall not insist on carrying the matter thus far. We shall content ourselves with *partial* prohibition. This is what no one can conscientiously deny of Popery, who knows any thing of what it is—and it is enough for our argument; for if we show the untenability of *partial* prohibition, we show also the untenability of *absolute* prohibition.

We have already said, that the subject of this evening's discussion is the private reading and interpretation of Scripture. This all consistent Protestants inculcate and diligently exemplify: while this, on the other hand, all consistent Romanists reprobate, and, as a Church, have done every thing in their power to discountenance and prevent; and the question now before us is, Whether Protestants or Romanists are in the right in this matter? In discussing this question, it will, we think, be of advantage to consider—first, the private *reading* of Scripture, and then its *interpretation*. We can easily conceive a universal dissemination of Bibles, without the liberty of private interpretation—and, on the other hand, liberty of interpretation, without universal dissemination. Let our first inquiry be, then, Whether Scripture ought to be universally disseminated?

Now, in entering on this discussion we maintain, that the burden of proof rests entirely on our opponents. This they themselves must allow, especially if they come short of absolute prohibition. We contend, that the nature of the sacred Writings implies unrestricted perusal, just as the nature of a proclamation implies universal promulgation. He, therefore, who would restrict the perusal of Scripture, ought himself surely to show us why he would do so; and not call upon us to show why he should *not* do so. Romanists call on us to prove that the Bible ought to be read indiscrimi-

nately by all, when they might as well call upon us to prove that the light of the sun or the breath which we inhale, ought to be enjoyed indiscriminately by all. As the nature of light and air, and their necessity to animal existence, manifest every man's right to enjoy them; so the nature and design of the Scriptures are proof demonstrative of every man's title to possess and enjoy them. The matter which they contain—matter of universal and most momentous concernment—the mode of address to individuals, to churches, to cities, to kingdoms, to all mankind—the utter absence of every thing that has the most distant appearance of restricted perusal; all these are proof demonstrative, that the holy Scriptures are intended, by their author, to be universally read and universally studied. Dr. Milner, in his *End of controversy*, asserts, “that if Christ had intended that all mankind should learn his religion by a book, viz., the New Testament, he himself would have written that book, and would have enjoined the obligation of reading it as the first and fundamental precept of his religion.” (page 83.) Is it not far more rational and far less presumptuous to say, that if Christ had intended that all mankind should *not* learn his religion by a book, since such a mode of learning would be attended with so many mischievous effects, as Romanists allege it is, besides not writing himself, he would have strictly prohibited others also from writing? Perpetuity and universal prevalence Christ undoubtedly designed for his Gospel; and what more natural for his followers than to adopt the surest and speediest means for obtaining this end, viz., the writing of a book, and obtaining for that book universal perusal? And if such means was unlawful, what more to be expected than prohibition of such means. Yet where is such prohibition to be found? And how could such prohibition, if it existed, be reconciled with the undoubted practice of the first ages of the Church. For it is a *remarkable*, and on Romish principles an *unaccountable* fact, that, in the first ages of Christianity, every means was adopted, which the times could afford, for enabling men of all nations and degrees, to possess and understand the sacred Writings. Translations of them into the languages of all the then civilized world, were speedily executed, and industriously circulated; so that ere long, Bibles were so widely and abundantly disseminated throughout the

christian community, and so highly prized by them, that their persecutors instituted the delivering up of these writings, as a means of evincing a return to Paganism. Indeed, considering how laborious and tardy were the means of multiplying books, the extent of Bible-circulation, previous to the art of printing, seems almost incredible. In the East, there were very early Syriac, Armenian, Arabic, Persic, Ethiopic, and Coptic versions of the Scriptures. Later than these versions, but not long after the conversion of the respective nations, there were Gothic, Frankish, Anglo-Saxon, and Sclavonic versions: and this conduct, with regard to the sacred Record, the primitive Christians pursued without a single thought of justifying themselves therein, well knowing that the nature and substance of that Record, not only *contained a warrant*, but *imposed an imperative obligation* to that course of conduct. In consequence of this universal dissemination of Scripture, men became so enlightened and pious that they agreed to discontinue the perusal of books that were profane, idolatrous, and irreligious. But as the Church increased in power, *voluntary discontinuance* became authoritative prohibition; and when it had become wholly secular and corrupt, and the perusal of Scripture threatened to bring it back to its primitive simplicity and purity, and an interested priesthood were about to lose that idolatrous reverence which gave them such a power over the minds, and, what was to them more material, over the coffers of a blind and deluded people; the authoritative prohibition of soul-destroying books extended to the life-giving and soul-quicken^g word of God. In Popish countries this prohibition is, to the present hour, rigorously enforced: and the woful effects of it are, alas! too apparent in the brutish ignorance, and superstition worse than brutish, which are so characteristic of the lower orders in countries purely Popish. Yet this state of things they anxiously wish to perpetuate, and call upon us to prove, that the means which they employ for this purpose—the prohibition of Scripture perused by the laity—are irrational and unscriptural: whereas, the evident impiety and spiritual tyranny of these means call upon them to satisfy our minds that they are not utterly opposed to God and subversive of Christianity. We maintain the Bible to be as much ours individually, as any other of the common gifts of God. In

it God addresses every accountable being; and that Church ought surely to be well-advised and fully satisfied of the lawfulness of their procedure, when they attempt to thwart the purposes of the Most High, by withholding from the people what he has given for universal diffusion.

What, then, are the grounds on which the Church of Rome proceeds, in withholding the Bible from them to whom it has been sent? Can they produce any direct scripture-authority for doing so? Nothing short of direct scripture-authority, one would suppose, should warrant such conduct. Is it, then, any where to be found? We unhesitatingly and unequivocally assert that it is not—no, not so much as an approach to it. We know that there are several passages usually quoted in connexion with this subject; but they dare not assert, that any one of them makes reference either directly or indirectly to the withholding of Scripture from the laity. They always refer to something else, and it is only by far-fetched, unnatural inference, that they can be made to bear upon the present question at all. One favourite scripture-authority, for example, is, that “no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation.” But what has this to do with private reading? It seems, indeed, to condemn private interpretation; but Rome has decreed that there may, in some cases, be private reading, (such as it is,) though there is, in no case, to be private interpretation of Scripture; and, therefore, although a passage may forbid the latter, it is not to be understood as forbidding the former. But that this assertion of the Apostle forbids neither the one nor the other, we will afterwards, we trust, satisfactorily show. Meanwhile, we again assert, that there is not one passage within the whole compass of the Bible which, even in the most distant manner, condemns scripture-perusal by the laity. How, then, you will, perhaps, with some impatience inquire, how do Romanists justify themselves in this matter? They attempt to do so by reasoning something like the following:—Scripture-prohibition, say they, in the first place, prevents the desecration of the Word of God; in the second, it preserves the unity of the Church; in the third, it prevents men from perverting Scripture to their own destruction; therefore their conclusion is, scripture-prohibition ought to be adopted and maintained. Let us now examine each of these reasons in its turn. And with regard to the

first—desecration of the Word of God—is it not evident to any mind that is at all alive to the holiness of God, and the sinfulness of the most sanctified of his creatures here below, that the gifts of God are abused by all without exception ; and that, were his blessings bestowed on those only who would not abuse them, none could receive them ? Romanists talk of the dishonour done to God's Word by Protestants and lay interpreters ; and all consistent Protestants will join in the complaint, and lament their own negligence, and even irreverence, in the study of revelation. But will these same Romanists affirm that they have never, in any degree, failed in their duty towards revelation ?—that they have never, in any degree, treated it unworthily or ungratefully ? If any of them affirm so, let common sense be judge, and we will convict them of presumption and self-deception. Lay interpreters *dishonour* God's Word, say Romanists; therefore, withhold it from them. Licensed interpreters—Romish priests, say we, dishonour God's Word and tradition too ; and of these last, John Calvin, and Martin Luther, according to Papists, were eminent examples ; why then not withhold the Scriptures from the Romish priesthood ?—But we contend that desecration of Scripture is not to us a sufficient reason for withholding it in any case. The other blessings of our lot, which we receive, and in the bestowment of which—Divine goodness be praised !—Romish priests dare not interfere, come to us regularly and abundantly, notwithstanding our habitual abuse of them. Every sin we commit is an

abuse of one or more of the good gifts of God ; yet he ceases not to bless us still. Indeed, were the conduct with regard to revelation adopted by our opponents, uniformly pursued by God, it would lead to the destruction of every sinful creature in the universe. Our very existence, as sinful creatures, is thus, you perceive, an experimental proof that mere liability to abuse does not *necessarily* lead to the withholding, or even speedily withdrawing, of the gifts abused. It does not do so in the gifts of God's providence. Is there any thing, then, in the gift of his Word which requires a difference of procedure ? Is there not rather in that gift what requires a scrupulous adherence to it ? Is it not a gift to sinful creatures—a gift designedly prepared for sinners, and carefully adapted to their circumstances ? And ought they not therefore to enjoy it above all other gifts notwithstanding their abuse of it ? They receive other gifts at the hand of God notwithstanding the abuse of them, such too as are not peculiarly adapted to their condition as sinners ; should they not, therefore, receive that which of all others is best adapted to their condition, and which moreover, is most productive, of all others, of that which is required—the worthy receiving of divine gifts ? Thus, then, you perceive, that not only is mere liability to abuse not to be considered as a sufficient reason for the withholding of God's gifts, but that, though it might be considered a sufficient reason in *other* cases, it ought not to be considered a sufficient reason in the case of the Bible.

(To be concluded in our next.)

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THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 14TH DECEMBER, 1838.

90.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN G. LORIMER, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. D. WELSH, D.D., Edinburgh.

ON THE PERPETUITY AND SAFETY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST;

A SERMON PREACHED ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, 24TH NOVEMBER, 1833,

By the Rev. JOHN G. LORIMER,
Minister of St. David's Church, Glasgow.

*“I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”—
MATT. xvi. 18.*

No one, we imagine, can be so ignorant as not to know, that in all ages, from the giving of the first promise down to the present hour, there has been in the world what is called a Church of Christ. This Church does not consist of those of any particular sect or party who may have arrogated to themselves the name of the Church, as if there were none belonging to it save themselves, but it consists of all those however scattered through different communions, who have received the Lord Jesus as their Saviour, and who have in consequence become new creatures. In other words, the Church of Christ is just a collection of genuine believers, whoever or wherever they may be, and it consists of no others; and not only so—there is great reason to fear that many who have contended keenly about their Church, and imagined that their party is the only true and safe one, have often deceived themselves, and have really held no connexion with the Church of Christ at all. This Church has in different ages varied in its forms, but its principles, and duties, and practices, have always been substantially the same. It has also varied in the number of its members, being at one period larger than at another; but compared with the population of the world, the widest charity must confess that it has always formed but a slender minority. This may seem strange; but it is still stranger, that though the per-

sons constituting this Church are unquestionably the most inoffensive in their conduct, the most estimable in their characters, the most useful and benevolent in their labours for others of any on the face of the earth, yet, that they have in all ages been greatly disliked and hated, ridiculed and oppressed, as if they had been the most worthless members of society. As individual Christians have been obnoxious to the men of the world, so, as might have been expected, the collective Church which they form has been not less hateful. The true, the holy, the spiritual Church of the Saviour has always been maltreated and abused, however much the visible, the gaudy, the great, and the worldly Church of nominal Christians may have been loved and honoured, and even worshipped by its respective partisans. This is no more than what the Bible prepares us to expect. We are not to be surprised at the enmity of man to the Church, nor would the Scriptures have us to be so. Her enemies are compared to strong men, and proud men, and men of wrath—to those who are cunning and persevering in their wiles to destroy—and not only so, they are compared to wild beasts which go roaring and ravening for their prey, ready to swallow up the Church alive, and never contented with all the mischief which they can perpetrate, but always anxious for

This opposition to the true Church proceeds from various quarters, and discovers itself under various forms; but it is always regulated in such a way as to be most powerful in the existing circumstances of the Church or the world. Sometimes there is open and merciless persecution—banishment, torture and death to the body. When the laws of toleration, and the spirit of civil society do not admit of this there may be the infidelity and licentiousness of a false liberality scarcely less dangerous. Heresies subversive of the fundamental truths of the gospel may appear at another season, perhaps spring from the Church herself; while, on another occasion, the civil revolutions which the abuses of false religion generate may be employed by the enemies of the Church of Christ to prejudice the cause of true religion and to mar its progress. From these and other causes, more especially when their opposition is combined, considerable danger often arises to the Church of Christ; she seems ready to perish, and the alarm of her friends is not small: they fear that their hardest labours and fondest hopes are about to come to nought.

And what, in these circumstances, should sustain and comfort a believing mind? Have we any assurance of the security of the Church of Christ, any reason to hope that she shall be preserved amid the violence and the subtlety of her foes, or is her future fate quite uncertain? Can we only reason on probabilities, and balance conjectures, and hope for the best, as we do in similar cases among men? These are interesting questions; and surely every Christian mind must feel anxious to have them satisfactorily answered. If we consult merely nominal Christians, they cannot afford us much light in our inquiry; with them all at best is doubtful; they cannot estimate aright the dangers with which the true Church is assailed, and they cannot look farther for strength to meet these dangers than what the visible institutions and apparatus of Christianity in the world supply. It is not improbable that a mere human reasoner, taking all circumstances into account, might conclude that the prospects of the Church of Christ in the world were by no means dark, he might even hope favourably for her triumph. But while we are far from undervaluing the influence of external and visible institutions—and know assuredly that God makes use of them in furthering the good of his Church—yet it must be allowed that arguments

founded upon them are uncertain, and that had we nothing better on which to rest, we might well, and many a time, fear greatly for the cause of our Redeemer. The enmity of the world to the spiritual Church of Christ has been, and is so unspeakably bitter and strong, that her continued existence is almost miraculous; and we all know how quickly an infidel or an antichristian convulsion might remove the best external institutions and bulwarks for the maintenance of Christianity in the earth. Never did the Church of Christ in our own country undergo a more fierce or exterminating persecution, than just at the time when her doctrine and her discipline were purest, and when we would have thought that her whole administration was so unexceptionable that no enemy could have had the least encouragement in aiming at her injury; and so also did it happen in primitive times. We cannot then trust to the force of merely outward considerations and advantages as arguments for the preservation of the Church of Christ; we must have something stronger and surer.

And if we turn to the Scriptures we do find much more than these—we meet with enough to comfort us with the strongest assurance of the safety of the true Church of Christ. Whatever may befall any particular sect of Christians, or any particular societies which they may have reared for the advancement of Christianity, the cause itself shall not die. The Church of the Saviour shall stand and flourish. This is a most comfortable thought for every christian mind amid the revolutions of time, and the assaults of enemies, and the convulsions of empires, and it is as sure as it is comfortable. Consider the evidence which is supplied in its behalf—by *presumption*—by *positive declaration*—and by *actual facts and experience*.

I. We begin with the presumptions in half of the safety of the Church of Christ. The Church, then, is dear to God. The members composing it have been elected to their character and calling from the ages of everlasting. They are the purchase of the blood of God's own and well beloved Son—they are the grand manifesters of his glory, so that did they fail, God, humanly speaking, would lose a large revenue of praise. These things must all attach him to them, and, so to speak, make God much interested in the preservation and prosperity of his Church. So we would argue in

lar cases among mén, and there seems no reason why we should not so argue in reference to God. Now, if the Church is dear to God, will he not uphold it? For its sake he continues to uphold nature through all her revolutions, and will he not then much more preserve the Church herself? Will he uphold nature, and yet allow that to be hopelessly marred, which confers upon the natural world a chief share of her importance and value? Think what a gross contradiction it would be to suppose, that God provided for the welfare of the Church at a great expenditure of care, and labour, and suffering, and then allowed Himself to be frustrated in all that was dear to his heart by the power and policy of Satan. The very thought is folly. Nothing could give the least countenance to such an idea, save that God either does not foresee the treatment which is to befall his Church, or that he is too weak to prevent it. Now both suppositions are inconsistent with the character of God. He well knows every enemy, and every assault of every enemy from first to last, with which his Church is destined to be visited, and easily can his power disappoint all their violence, and easily can he make his Church safe, and render her days perpetual. Surely then, this will be his conduct towards her. We may be able to see good reasons why God should allow his Church to be for a time depressed. This may be rendered subservient both to his glory and his people's good; but that he should suffer what is so dear to him to be trodden to destruction—that he should suffer the light which he himself has kindled, to be for ever extinguished, and darkness to reign without a rival, is quite incomprehensible under the government of God. So far then as mere presumptions go, we seem warranted to conclude, that however menacing may be the aspects of things, the Church of Christ shall never perish—she shall abide while the earth abides.

II. But secondly, we have positive evidence of the truth of the doctrine of the text. The Scriptures abound with passages to this import, and they are very striking. Every declaration of the perpetual existence and safety of believers, amounts to a declaration of the perpetuity and safety of the Church which they compose. No one, we are told, be he man, or angel, or devil, shall ever be able to pluck a Christian from his Father's hand; and if so, as little shall he be

able to pluck the Church—to pluck a multitude of Christians from the same blessed security. It would be an easier thing to separate one than many; and if it be absolutely impossible to dissever even one believer from God, how can it be supposed that the whole Church of the redeemed may be separated from him, and that the purposes of God concerning them may fall unexecuted to the ground? We are assured, and it is not the word of man, but the word of unchangeable Truth, "That the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church"—"that no weapons formed against the Church of Christ shall prosper;" on the contrary, that they shall hopelessly fail. We are told that the Lord is around his people as a wall of fire, and what a defence is this! Walls of wood or stone can afford considerable shelter, but they may be surmounted or removed. Not so a wall of fire. It does not merely protect the besieged, it carries destruction to the enemy—it is death to approach it; who can fight with fire, and a wall of fire sending forth its heat and flames with exhaustless power? Then we are told that "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, (and they surrounded Jerusalem in such strength and beauty as almost to render it impregnable,) so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever." We are told that "he suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, he reproved kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine Anointed." How expressive are these words! The Church is represented as dearer to God than kings and states, though their importance be not small, and he forbids them even to touch his people. So far from injuring or destroying, he will not allow them even to touch them; nay, the command is given in the most imperative form, "touch them not;" as if he had said, "It is at your peril to touch them, you will incur my highest displeasure if you attempt to do so;" and to give men some idea of how displeasing it would be to harm God's people, they are told that he who toucheth them, toucheth the apple of God's eye—they touch the dearest and tenderest part—what God will protect and vindicate as carefully as men defend their eyesight. Quite in the spirit of these passages we are informed with the utmost certainty, that the kingdom of Christ is a kingdom which not only may not or shall not, but *cannot* be moved; and that so far from being rooted up or destroyed, all the king-

doms of this world are one day to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. And to sum up the proof on this part of the subject, how expressive and sublime is the declaration of the glorified Saviour to his apostle, John, in the book of Revelation : " I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death." You are all aware that at the time in which these words were uttered, the Christian Church was suffering severe persecution, and very dark were her prospects for the future—all the apostles had finished their course, saving John, and he was in exile in the island of Patmos. In these circumstances there was much to damp and discourage ; but Christ interposes with the animating assurance that he is the Living One—and the Head being alive, the other parts of the body partake of its vitality. He declares that he lives for ever, and of course so shall the Church, which is indissolubly united to himself ; nay, the better to cheer his servant, he declares that he holds in his hands the keys of hell and of death—that he possesses complete power over the Church's greatest enemies—that he bends at will that fiery persecution which hell conceives, and death carries into action. And what more could the Church or any Christian desire, than such assurances as these ? What stronger pledge of the perpetuity and safety of the people of God could be given ? None of these declarations are doubtful in their language, or uncertain in their meaning. They are most clear and decided ; and when it is remembered that they come from God, we cannot fear that they shall ever fail—we may be absolutely sure that they shall all be realized. But this will be more apparent when we consider,

III. In the third place, the evidence of actual fact and experience. Though we had nothing more than God's word on which to rely—though all his promises in reference to the continued existence of the Church were still future, yet his simple declaration would have been enough to satisfy us of the infallible certainty of the object contemplated. But we can go farther than words ; we can appeal to facts—we can point to experimental proofs of the safety of the Church of Christ, even when placed in circumstances of the greatest danger. It is a remarkable general truth, which the history and prophecies of both Old and New Testaments amply

substantiate, that the temporal kingdoms and empires of the world have been prosperous or the reverse, according as they have favoured or injured the Church of God. We have not time to pursue the proof into details : just remember how well it fared with Egypt under Joseph—with Canaan under the Judges—with Persia under Cyrus, while they favoured the Church of God, and how adverse their condition became when they began to injure and oppress that Church. Men, however, in their infatuation have much more frequently acted the part of foes than of friends, and hence the punishment is more common than the reward. We may remind you of the confederated kings who were overthrown by Abraham for their captivity of Lot of the fate of the hostile nations which surrounded Canaan—of the Assyrian, and Grecian, and Jewish, and Roman kingdoms, and their successors down to the present day ; kingdoms which have all in their turn been doomed to experience the wrath of the Lamb, because they dared to lift their arms against his people. Now, what does this show ? Does it not show that God's watchful, preserving care is extended over his Church, and that sooner than have her destroyed he will destroy her enemies ? This is a matter of fact, and how strongly does it speak in behalf of the safety of the Redeemer's cause !

But, leaving general ground, descend for a little to individual instances of deliverance which God has wrought for his Church.—How did he deliver from Egypt when all reasonable hope seemed to have departed—when one would have thought that the Church was about to expire ; and how great was the manifestation of wisdom and power by which he accomplished his gracious intentions ? At a later day, Jerusalem seemed ready to be destroyed, and Babylon opened wide her gates to receive and retain the children in everlasting bondage ; but the captives were restored, and their temple rebuilt—their city made glorious again, and all by the mighty hand of God. At a period still later, when Jerusalem became ripe for judgment, we might have feared that in the intense hatreds, the rending civil commotions, the overflowing bloodshed of that unhappy day, the infant Church of Christ would have been extinguished ; and so it would have been, had man been its only guardian, but God provided an asylum for his servants in the city of Pella ; and there

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is no reason to believe that a single Christian perished, while unbelieving Jews fell in appalling multitudes for days, and months, and years together. And if God wrought such deliverance for his Church in former times, can it be supposed that he has ceased to care for her now? Is it to be imagined that he will deliver her no longer—that he will henceforward abandon her to the power of the foe? Shall we not rather believe that, unlike to us, God is unchangeable in all his plans and purposes, and that the deeper interest of the affairs of the Church, as they draw near their grand consummation, will, so to speak, animate him with a warmer care, and call forth a stronger arm in her defence?

But God does not merely deliver his Church from danger—the *time* at which he does so is worthy of our notice. This always affects the value of the deliverance which is vouchsafed. Now it is when reduced to the last extremity that God interposes. He, indeed, sometimes crushes the evil intention in its birth, or he arrests the enemy, like Sennacherib, in the height of his enterprise, but very often he allows his people to be at their last struggle before he appears.—The misery of the Israelites is doubled beyond endurance, ere the day of mercy dawns.—The three young men are actually thrown into the fiery furnace.—Daniel is shut up in the lions' den.—The decree for the extermination of the Jews is actually established by the unchangeable laws of the Medes and Persians.—Peter is sleeping in the dungeon between soldiers on the very night before his intended mock trial. In all these cases, and in many others, the children and servants of God were reduced to the last terrible moment; nothing is done for them till they have reached the very verge of ruin—*then* God strikes in with deliverance.

And why are matters thus ordered? Not certainly to afflict or torment God's people—not because he is hard-hearted or indifferent till roused by dreadful necessity. No: Daniel was as dear to God at other times as when enclosed in the lions' den; and so were the three youths; and so was Peter; and so was Paul in his shipwreck; but, God delays his interposition for the same reason that Christ tarried two or three days where he was after hearing that his beloved Lazarus was sick. He delays his deliverance till the last, that his own glory, his wisdom, his justice, his mercy, may be the

more conspicuously displayed; that his people may have a deeper sense of his love, and cherish a warmer gratitude for his favours; that his enemies may be humbled in the very moment of their fancied triumph, and may better perceive and acknowledge the awful justice of God. Alter the time of deliverance and all these important effects are impaired if not neutralized. And surely then the fact, that God not only delivers his Church in circumstances of danger, but, delivers in a very seasonable manner, strikingly proves how affectionate is the care which he exercises over her, and forms a strong assurance to us, that as he has acted in the past so he will act in the future—that, in the language of the text, the gates of hell shall never prevail against his Church and people.

And now having established, let us *apply* the doctrine of our text to practical use. What comfort does it minister to believers! Loving Christ, every Christian loves the Church of Christ; indeed, this is an admirable test of personal religion, inasmuch as it is a feeling to which no mere nominalist can pretend. Now, often the condition and prospects of the Church are such as to fill the believer with sorrow and fear. The enemy seems to triumph; the Christian, in unbelief, is ready to dread the extinction of the Lord's cause, and his prayers and labours in its behalf are proportionally enfeebled. This despondency is most encouraging to the foe; he rejoices that God's promises seem to fail, and that predictions of evil seem about to be realized. But let not the believer be troubled except for his own negligence and fearfulness. Let him not be afraid of the Ark of God. Let him be comforted with the assurance, that the cause of God shall survive and be upheld and flourish over all the opposition of enemies, and over all the unbelief of friends; that it is a plant which thorns cannot choke, a bush which, though ever burning, cannot be consumed. Let him not, however, wonder, if the Church be so severely handled that he, with all his inoffensiveness and circumspection, cannot escape the fire of the foe; let him rather wonder and be thankful, that with such hatred to the gospel burning in the hearts of sinners, he escapes so lightly as he does. Let him lay his account with the Church being wounded, and humbled, and oppressed in every possible way; but let him be comforted with the remembrance that nothing has and that nothing can be-

fall her except what God appoints—that if she is ever injured or spoiled, it is not when men please but when God pleases—that if she be delivered into the hands of her enemies it is God who delivers her. Let the believer remember, that as Shimei could never curse David till God bade him, nor Satan touch Job till he received God's permission, nor the devils enter the swine till Christ commanded; no more can the Church receive any hurt till God gives her over for a prey.

Next, let him remember, that if God does so prepare affliction for his Church, it is not intended for her evil, but for her good. When heresy breaks forth—when convulsions shake the earth and infidelity laughs with joy, the believer may be ready to despond, and fear that all is over; but no—let him be comforted. This is but a dark passage to a brighter day. The Church shall not only stand undestroyed—she shall gain; she shall be purified by the thunder storm which agitates the atmosphere; she shall come forth from its darkness and its troubles more beautiful, and glorious, and tranquil than before. Thus it has happened in every past trial and revolution through which the Church has passed, and thus it will happen in all those which she is destined to encounter in the future. Let Christians then be comforted; let them set their minds quite at rest as to the indestructible existence and universal triumphs of the Church, but let not the foreknowledge of the victory tempt them to be idle and secure. This is not the design of the promise, but a most shameful, a most sinful abuse of its kindness. Our duty to pray and to labour for the perpetuity of the Church is not in the least degree impaired, it is deepened and enlarged by our knowledge that these prayers and labours shall not be in vain. Thus would the matter be judged of by men, and thus it will be judged of by God. While then you praise God for his preserving goodness to the Church in past times, and mingle your hallelujahs with those of priests and prophets, in every age of her history, and waft them upwards to the twenty-four elders, and blend them with the ascriptions of those who cease not day nor night to give glory, and honour, and thanksgivings to the Lamb on the throne, who lives for ever and ever;—while you do this, and do it with all your heart, never forget that it is in the use of means that the Church is upheld—that your efforts to

extend her dominion by the conversion of sinners, are one of the best securities for her preservation; and that of all the praise which you can offer, this is incomparably the sweetest and most grateful to the ear of God—to proclaim to others the glory of his grace, and extend to all the blessings of Messiah's reign.

One word to the enemies of the Church, and we conclude. This enmity is the state of every mind by nature, till renewed by the Spirit of God; but to some the name of enemies of the Church of Christ is peculiarly applicable, and they are, it is to be feared, not few in number. Whoever they may be we say to them, your enmity and your opposition to the Church of Christ are vain; even the gates of hell shall not prevail against her, and can you suppose that you shall prevail—that the servant shall prove stronger and wiser than his master? You may dream that your unsanctified philosophy and science, your unsanctified literature and liberty, the restless spirit of inquiry and the hatred to many religious institutions which now spread over the earth are preparing the way for your triumph, and you may welcome the incipient commotions which agitate the nations as the forerunners of deliverance from so galling a usurpation as that of the Church of Christ and Christianity; but greatly do you deceive yourselves—most mortifying is the disappointment which you are preparing for yourselves. You may indeed be successful in overthrowing the outward institutions, and visible societies, and apertures of religion, but you cannot prevail against the Church herself, (and this is the only thing which can truly gratify your malice and ungodliness,) until you pull the Redeemer from his throne, and prove all the promises which God has given, and all the deliverances which God has wrought, to be delusion. Little as you may imagine it, the apparent success against the Church of Christ in which you so proudly rejoice is from God; it is not your doing, but his. The knowledge, and philosophy, and revolutions from which you expect so much, are all instruments in the hand of God, and shall all, aye, every one of them, be made subservient to the advancement of that very gospel which you dread and dislike. The world, with all that lives and breathes upon it, exists but for the sake of the Church of God; and, when his purposes regarding her are accomplished, shall be burnt up: you yourselves, willing or unwilling, shall be made

to minister to the same end. Cease then to fight with God and with his Church. The labour is not only vain, it is destructive: and every enemy who ever tried it will tell you so. But be at peace with God through his Son—become a member of the true Church by union to the Lord Jesus, the living Head; and then instead of being agitated by the instability of worldly things you will partake of the Church's glorious and abiding perpetuity. Convulsions civil and religious may rend the earth—judgment may descend upon the pale horse—

the nations may muster to their last, their most terrible conflict, but you shall be secure. As the gates of hell cannot prevail against the Church, so they shall not be able to prevail against you. God will grant deliverance at the appointed time and in the appointed way;—it may be deliverance into new heavens and a new earth, and the struggles and the warfare of the Church and of Christians shall then be known and felt no more. May God hasten the blessed period, in his infinite mercy, and to his name be the praise. Amen.

ON THE BOUNTIFULNESS OF GOD;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THE EVENING OF THE COMMUNION SABBATH, 30 NOVEMBER, 1833, IN ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH,

By the Rev. DAVID WELSH, D.D.,

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"Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."—
Ps. cxvi. 7.

THESE are the words of the Psalmist, upon his experiencing a signal deliverance by the good providence of God, in answer to his earnest prayers. In the following discourse, however, I shall not limit their application to such as may be placed in circumstances precisely similar to those of the inspired writer, but shall consider them as containing an expression of sentiments which may be appropriated to men of various characters and in various conditions.

The only true rest of the intelligent creatures of God consists in the enjoyment of the Creator. This was the original condition of man: his mind was staid upon God, and he was kept in perfect peace. By the Fall we have been removed from this blessed state, and there is no peace for us till we return unto the Lord, resting upon Christ for salvation. "There is no rest, saith our God, to the wicked." The turbulence of unruly passions, the cravings of unsatisfied desires, the weariness and disappointment that attend success, the sad vicissitudes of this mortal state, the shocks and collisions of contending interests—all these agitate and disquiet the mind. Angry passions rise and rage; restless and unquiet thoughts fill the bosom—no spot is sacred from their intrusion; the dove of peace is scared away, finding no place for her hallowed nest. *Un-godly men* frequently, indeed, experience a

temporary happiness, but these periods of tranquillity are all delusive. The clouds of coming storm are ever gathering; and, should the tempest be restrained in this world, alas! the deceitful calm is but the prelude to a hurricane, where the soul must be for ever lost. There are many exposed to this fearful jeopardy. They pass through the world without any fixed or determinate course—now yielding to the enjoyment of the bright sunshine of a treacherous happiness, and now trusting to an anchored state they never reach, never seek after, scarcely seem to know of that haven where alone they can be secure. There are others who have been awakened to a sense of the misery of their condition. The guilty actions of their past lives come before their minds in appalling distinctness, and the shores of eternity force themselves on their view and fill them with alarm; a broken law suggests angry judgments; destruction threatens them on every side; fear takes hold of them, and in anguish they exclaim, "What shall I do to be saved?" There are some also who, though they have found the way to the Father, and trust in him as a reconciled God in Christ, have their confidence disturbed by the calamities which they experience in this mortal life. In the midst of their afflictions they exclaim, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Is his mercy

clean gone for ever?" And, in the words of the psalm before us, they record their woe : " The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me : I found trouble and sorrow." But the Psalmist, in the midst of his distresses, had recourse unto God, and, by the manifestations made to him in the ordinances of divine grace, peace was restored to his mind ; and the various classes of individuals I have mentioned, may find a motive in the contemplation of the bountifulness of God, for their soul returning unto its rest. Let us, then, consider some of those particulars in which the Lord may be said to have dealt bountifully with the children of men.

The bountifulness of the Lord, we may remark, in the first place, is shown in the works of creation and providence. The most superficial consideration must be sufficient to satisfy us of this truth. In all the works of his hands, and in all the arrangements of his providence, we may perceive a royal munificence and bountifulness. All his gifts to us are kingly, and are poured down on us with a profusion which speaks of sources that can never be exhausted, and of a hand that is never weary, and are bestowed upon us with a fulness and liberality suited to the supreme dignity of Him with whom we have to do. Certain circumstances are said to mark the procedure of a sovereign prince, whose realms are stored with countless riches, and who feels that his majesty and might are in the communicating of them. What is trifling would be unworthy of a monarch to bestow ; what is measured, and numbered, and contracted, would be unworthy of the freedom and affluence of a king. Now, the gifts bestowed by God upon man are of such inestimable value, are of such endless variety and exuberant bountifulness, that I think lives would fail to examine and count their store. Even in regard to our corporeal frame, what skill, what bounty, has he shown! All the ingenuity of man could not supply the loss of one, or of the smallest part of one, bodily organ. What bountifulness, then, in the whole of the bodily mechanism! Could all the artists in the world bring together so many contrivances of delight? What architect could rear for the soul so commodious a tabernacle ; what statuary such a form of body? Our ideas of the divine munificence mount upward, by contemplating those noble faculties which exalt us above the beasts of the field and

the fowls of heaven—faculties thus connected harmoniously with each other, and all joined in wise relationship to the various existences around us. With what kindness and overflowing bounty has the earth its numerous sources of gratification for our varied powers, bringing enjoyment to us at every hand, and leading our footsteps amidst all its delights?

The bountiful beneficence of the Most High is seen also in the stately mansion prepared for our habitation. Though constructed only for a temporary abode, what mighty power, consistency, and minute attention, does it not display—what exquisite perfection of design—what perfect workmanship in every part of the stupendous fabric! The wild mountains which the sovereign architect has reared and piled majestically to heaven—the heavens spread over them as a curtain, and the array of sun, moon and stars, which, in beautiful succession, adorn this azure canopy—those cloudy regions that have been found stored by nature for dropping down fatness on our heads—the various delights which, with curious art, and kindly care, and vast goodness, are prepared for us, and where all is beauty and music, and every string of life may be touched with transport. These blessings are increased by the friends who share them with us—the blessings of our Father's house we are permitted to communicate to others, and the heart is improved in the blessed exercise of all the affections. This is the dwelling-place the Lord has given us ; and when we think of the grandeur and decorations of the structure and the richness of contrivance with which it abounds—the pursuits which exalt and enlarge, the friendships that endear, the enjoyments that refresh and invigorate ; when we think that the Almighty has erected for us such an abode, fashioned it with so much art, adorned it with so much care, and enriched it with such costly treasures ; when we think of all these things, can we deny that the Lord hath dealt bountifully with us?

I am aware that there are in the world, who may say that this is a description which will in no way apply to them—that the splendour, and bounties, and riches, of which we speak are unknown to many, and that some may exclaim that they have been born to labour, and that labour has brought sorrow. But, my friends, though you do not perceive proofs of divine bounty, that surely does not prove that God is not bounti-

ful! Have you not been blessed with some powers of mind and body? Have you not raiment wherewith you are clothed? Have you not health and strength to labour for your daily bread, and to enjoy it? Then you have felt, if not understood and appreciated all we have represented. The blessings referred to are common to all—they are peculiar to none—an exclusive right to them cannot be purchased; we have only to open our eyes and see the glories around us which God has conferred on his works. Consider also that we have forfeited all right to favour at the hand of the Most High, and that even in bestowing on us the most common mercies, he hath dealt bountifully with us. Does he not cause his sun to shine and his rain to descend upon you? Do you not breathe the blessed air, and does he not give you meat in due season? And, having such a covenant sign as this, can you think that he is a hard master? Examine also how much of your own unhappiness arises from your own inordinate desires—from a spirit of discontent with your situation. Some may conceive that the description I have given is imaginary or peculiar only to the rich and great; but, in reality, all the essential sources of happiness are open alike to all. The most valuable gifts of Divine bounty are most widely spread, and unconfined, and may be enjoyed by every one who will "taste and see that the Lord is good." The enjoyments of the rich are more nearly on a level with those of the poor than is commonly supposed. Common mercies, though little prized, are the most valuable; and we need only be deprived of them to be convinced of this truth. I would then have you who make objections to consider, that if you have the healthy enjoyment of your faculties, and receive your daily bread, you want nothing but content with your condition to convince you that the Lord hath dealt bountifully with you. There is many a man possessed of abundant riches, who would willingly exchange all his possessions for your poor attire, humble fare and laborious life, if you would take his aching head and burning breast; and does not this show that the health you enjoy is better than all their riches, and in conferring this single blessing on any, may it not be said that the Lord hath dealt bountifully with them? You may think little of the common air of heaven, yet there are many captives wasting away in their prison-houses; and, my

brethren, what would they give once more to find themselves breathing in the freshness around them, and to experience once more that it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun? Go to the deaf, the blind and the maimed—is there any gift equal to the removal of their diseases; and yet, in the goodness of his providence have all those powers been preserved to you, and will you, just because you enjoy blessings, refuse to acknowledge that the Lord hath dealt bountifully with you?

There is another objection of a more serious nature to the representation I have given. We see, it may be said, many proofs of the Divine bounty; but, along with this, many proofs of the Divine displeasure. We have forfeited all right to the bounty so conspicuously displayed; in participating of it, therefore, we receive what is not our own. We go on, therefore, in the second place to state, that the bountifulness of God is shown by the dispensation of his mercy in Jesus Christ. It is in the economy of grace that the riches of Divine goodness are especially manifested. By it, believers receive a new title to all the gifts of providence; and in the economy of grace itself, we have gifts infinitely more valuable in themselves than in any of the works of nature—inconceivably more precious, and yet conferred with unconditional freeness, and, in the utmost extent, upon those who not only have no claim on the Divine beneficence, but who have subjected themselves to the curse of the Most High. In regard to the great gift of the gospel, in which all these spiritual blessings are treasured up, was there any thing in heaven itself—with reverence be it spoken—that the Father could have bestowed on man that he could have valued more, or that could have been more precious to us? The plant of renown, the pearl of great price, the Son of the Highest, the delight of the everlasting Father, the chiefest among ten thousand God has bestowed on man; for God spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up to the death for us all. Well might the Apostle in holy gratitude exclaim, "Thanks be unto God for his *unspeakable gift*," for language has no name to express all that is treasured up in Christ. The blessing conferred upon us is inestimable in its price; and the height, and the depth, and the breadth, and the length of the love of God in Christ passeth understanding. It would be much for a sovereign prince to part with.

the richest jewel in his crown to the humblest of his subjects; but here is the Sovereign of the universe giving up his own Son for the rescue of a rebellious world; for "we are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." Surely then, my friends, from the very fact that God has sent his own Son into the world, we have a strong proof that the Lord hath dealt bountifully with us.

But the bounty of God will appear still more conspicuous, if we consider all that is involved in the gift of his Son. Upon this subject nothing more can be expressed than in the words of the apostle Paul, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" And, again, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ." It has just been asked, What greater gift could the Father bestow on man than his own Son? and, we may now add to our inquiry, What blessing is there that man can desire which is not offered in Christ?—the forgiveness of sin, the renewal of our nature, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. All fulness dwelleth in Christ; and out of his fulness there is communicated unto all his people, even grace for grace. In him is life—he is the original communicator of existence, for without him was not any thing made that was made; and by giving up the Prince of life unto the death, the Father communicates a new, a spiritual, an eternal life unto all them that believe. He is formed in his people the principle of spiritual existence, and in him they find the heavenly sustenance that supports that existence. "He that cometh unto Him shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Him shall never thirst." There are presented to us in him, objects commensurate with all our faculties, and, extending throughout all eternity, a living fountain increasing with the progressive increase of our powers. He is represented in Scripture in every relation that can be conceived to be most necessary for our being and our happiness. He is a sun and shield—he is spoken of as a physician to the distempered soul, as a rock of defence, as a master, a shepherd, a way, a husband, a friend, a father, a prophet, a priest, and a king. He is all things unto his people, and they are complete in him. We cannot

be in any situation in which he does not manifest himself to us as all we could require. Are we in doubt or in difficulty? He represents himself as our guide in the way we should go. Are we suffering under affliction? His Spirit is ever present as our comforter. Do we fall into sin? We have him as our advocate with the Father, who by his blood cleanseth us from all sin. Are we exposed to temptation? He is captain of our salvation, and will give us the victory. Do we pass through the valley and shadow of death? He is a rod and staff to comfort and support us. In giving us such a Saviour as this, then, it surely may be said that the Lord hath dealt bountifully with us. What is it that he has not bestowed in Christ? "All things," it is said to the believer, "are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." In every thing connected with the memory of Christ, the bounty of our heavenly Father is eminently displayed. My limits allow me to refer only to one or two illustrations which the believer may follow out in his own meditations. In bestowing his Son on the world, then, the Lord hath shown that he is bountiful in reference to the gifts of the Spirit. As the Spirit is not given by measure to the Saviour himself, so his blessed influences are communicated in plenteous effusion to all who are willing to receive them—animating to holiness, teaching us all things, bringing all things to our remembrance, comforting with the ordinances of the Gospel, helping our infirmities, and making intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. How bountiful, then, is he in permitting us to enjoy the quickening presence of this heavenly power, applying the truth and rendering it effectual for conviction, for conversion, for sanctification, communion and eternal life!

In all the means of grace also by which the Spirit operates, the bounty of the Most High is manifested. What a glorious affluence is there in his word! What condition is there in man to which some parallel is not found in the Scriptures? What situation is there in which we can be placed where there is not found a precept to direct, an example to imitate, a consolation to support, a doctrine to teach, a warning to advise, a promise to animate, and a remedy to heal? Can any grief go beyond reach of its con-

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soling truth? Every man will see, as in a glass, his face reflected there; and the words will appear as written with a special reference to his peculiar circumstances. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; his statutes are right, rejoicing the heart. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb." Yes, my friends, to every believer there is in the sacred volume a fulness and a richness that are inexhaustible. He seeks to have its truth engraven on his memory and his heart—he meditates on it day and night; every time he has recourse to it, he discovers some new truth, or a truth already known comes into his mind with the freshness of a new delight. He finds himself admitted into the society of Patriarchs, Prophets and Apostles—he hears the voice of the Almighty himself speaking to him in mercy and love. In this way, like the Psalmist of old, he hides the word in his heart as a precious treasure; the more he studies it the more does he find it "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;" and in its wondrous adaptation to all the diversities of his experience, he gratefully acknowledges that the Lord hath dealt bountifully with him. The promise of the Almighty is, that his people shall be satisfied with the goodness of his house. The Psalmist declared, that he rejoiced when they said unto him, go up unto the house of the Lord; and the experience of every believer will bear testimony to the Divine goodness, in making one day in the courts of God's house better than a thousand, and rendering it better to be a door-keeper in the house of God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. Divine ordinances compose the ruffled feelings, by withdrawing the mind from the agitating cares of this mortal state, and communicating life, light, comfort and joy. The treasure, indeed, is in earthen vessels, but this exhibits the more the bountifulness and excellence of the power of God, in rendering means so unpromising efficacious to such ends.

Farther, the Lord hath dealt bountifully with us at a throne of grace. The records of Scripture and the experience of believers clearly bear testimony to this truth. His goodness and bounty are shown in allowing such sinful creatures to prevail at a throne of grace; above all, in animating our hearts to implore blessings of him who is ever bestowing more than we are

able to ask or think. I trust that we have this day experienced, that the Lord hath dealt bountifully with us also at his table. In the ordinance of the supper the richest provision is made for sincere communicants. They receive the body of Christ which is meat indeed, and his blood which is drink indeed. They experience within them the workings of that Spirit that raised up the Lord Jesus from the dead. At a communion table the principle of the new life receives the amplest accessions; every grace is enlivened and invigorated, faith is gifted with clearer vision, repentance mourns with a deeper and sincerer, yet with a more tranquilizing sorrow, love is kindled into holy ardour, hope springs forward with more exulting anticipation. The elements of spiritual nourishment diffuse themselves throughout all the frame, and the heart becomes alive to God. We are far from saying that this is uniformly the case even with worthy communicants, but that in some degree, at least, it will be experienced by all the faithful followers of Christ. And all these, at least, will allow that the deficiency is in themselves and not in the ordinance, if they do not experience that in it the Lord hath dealt bountifully with them. The same remarks might be extended to all the other ordinances, but it is unnecessary. We may remark, that the goodness exhibited in the covenant of grace is essential to our appreciating aright the bountifulness of God and the blessings of his providence; for it is only by the death of Christ that we have a covenant-right to them. This consideration infinitely enhances their value, and should increase our gratitude. We see in that case every gift of Providence secured to us by that conflict that our Saviour sustained, and to come to us inscribed with the blood of the Redeemer. The goodness of the Almighty is manifested in the particulars to which we have referred; it is surely enough to convince ungodly men of their guilt and ingratitude, and to lead them to return again unto the Lord. Some, however, may perhaps inquire how these blessings are bestowed. The soul awakened to a sense of sin may perhaps say, here are blessings innumerable and inestimable, but what refer-

—have these to me? They would afford me rest were they mine—they are in every respect adapted to my wants, but what comfort can I derive from them till I prove that I have a title to share them? Now, this question brings us to what we conceive the

very essence of the glorious Gospel. Christ and all the blessings of salvation are offered to sinners to enjoy, not as what may be attained at some distant period—not as what may be attained at present on the performance of some difficult action—no: they are offered even now simply for your acceptance.

“He that hath hears to hear let him hear.”

“He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.” The bountifulness of a giver consists in the magnitude of his gifts, and in the freeness with which they are bestowed. But the blessings unfolded in the Gospel of Christ for his people are inestimable in themselves, and clogged with no restrictions. The Sun of Righteousness is shining, and you have only to open your eyes to enjoy his beams—the arms of Divine favour are stretched out to receive you, then return unto your rest. In the case of believers who have experienced some signal blessing, or enjoyed some extraordinary privilege, the words of the text are especially appropriate. Even in afflicting dispensations there are many sources of comfort, and the Lord is often seen to be bountiful in what he takes as well as in what he gives. He removes what stood in the

way of greater good—he takes away that he may give more in value. The Lord is often most kind when he appears most severe. When calamity comes, when light flies and the day darkens, and when, after having been brought low, the Lord helpeth him, the believer is especially called on to magnify the Lord, to put his trust in his name, to testify his gratitude by walking in holiness in the land of the living. When his doubts and perplexities are dispelled, when signal blessings are communicated and extraordinary privileges enjoyed, the soul of the believer will be enlarged; and I trust, that the souls of many are enlarged this day in the contemplation of the Divine perfections, and that, catching the flame which burned in the breast of the Psalmist, they will exclaim, “I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications: because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore, will I call upon him as long as I live. Gracious is the Lord and righteous, yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.” Amen.

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To whom all Communications should be addressed.

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ADDRESS by the REV. WILLIAM BRASH, Glasgow.

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ON THE PRIVATE READING AND INTERPRETATION OF
SCRIPTURE;

A Sermon Preached by the Rev. GEORGE CRAIG,--Concluded from page 108.

But besides these considerations, which are, each of them, decisive of the question, is it not enough to evince the absurdity of our opponents' plea, and, at the same time, their own inconsistency, to show that, while they avowedly withhold Scripture lest it should be abused, they nevertheless impart it, at least what they allege to be Scripture? It surely will not be too much to take for granted, that the Bible consists not of that which we see and feel—leaves and boards; but of that which we read and understand—its meaning or import. We doubt not that Romanists will at once allow, that though its external form has undergone a thousand changes, from the written scroll to the private pocket-volume, its internal substance has remained the same. They will admit, that it matters not whether it be imprinted on paper, or on the memory; whether it be seen by the eye, or heard by the ear; nay, more, whether it be given in the words of inspiration, or in the words of fallible men; still it may be the Bible. In fact, it is one of the dogmas of popery, that Scripture can be communicated as well, or better, with the living voice, and in the shape of catechisms. What, then, do we conclude from this? We conclude, that Romanists, while they withhold Scripture from a fear of its being abused, nevertheless actually impart it, *i.e.*, what they pretend to be Scripture. The Bible, they say, is not for vulgar use, lest it be desecrated. When they say so, they must mean, as we have shown, not its external form, but internal substance; not the letter, but the sense. As a book—and apart from its meaning, the Bible is no more, no holier than other books, and is therefore no more liable to desecration—all that renders it superior to other books, and more

liable to be abused, is its import; and yet it is the import or meaning that Romanists impart. They impart, *i.e.*, pretend to impart what alone can be desecrated, and withhold what cannot be desecrated. Thus we find, that what our opponents suppose to be tenable in theory, is utterly untenable in practice; that what they maintain in debate, and for special purposes, is contradicted by their very existence as a Church. Their priests are ordained for the very purpose of making known and recommending the Gospel of Christ, with all its essential and concomitant truths, to sinners of mankind, *i.e.*, to those who will undoubtedly abuse it; and yet the Council of Trent have absurdly decreed, that the Scriptures ought to be withheld, and for this reason, that they are liable to abuse. Romanists, therefore, must either maintain, that the printed word is liable to abuse, and the preached word *incapable* of abuse; or, acknowledge that their principles are contradicted by their practice in the present question. If liability to abuse be a sufficient reason for withholding Scripture, they act inconsistently in presenting it in any form, because it is liable to abuse in every form. The only way in which we can suppose them to act consistently is, by supposing them qualified to accomplish that which God himself has not accomplished; and that is, to present Scripture in such a form as to be incapable of abuse. We know not that their arrogance has ever advanced so far as to claim such a power as this; and we therefore conclude, that inconsistency, and not impiety, is here to be charged upon the Church of Rome. We know, indeed, that she has arrogated to herself a power of working impossibilities in another matter—that of making good evil, and evil good.

We would not, however, attribute impiety to her in more instances than she has herself given us. We would rather convict her of a thousand inconsistencies, than of one instance of impiety so appalling. Yet it is to be regretted that Romanists, if not a Church, at least as individuals, cannot be all acquitted of irreverence, arrogance and impiety, in their statements with regard to Scripture. For one of them, when writing to the editor of the *Orthodox Journal*, gravely eulogizes him for publishing a school-book, one single reading of which, he says, will convey to the minds of the ignorant a knowledge of religion, which *a whole lifetime* spent in reading the Bible would never furnish them:—The words are remarkable, “which a whole lifetime spent in the reading of the Bible would never furnish them.” This better than inspired book, too, he recommends to Bible Societies, to disseminate in place of the Bible, as a book better fitted to make known the principles of the Christian faith. What a libel is this on the Wisdom of the All-wise! What daring presumption! What blasphemous abuse of the Word of life! God has condescended to give us a written record of his will in the language of men; but he has spoken ambiguously and unintelligibly. His obscure dictation, it seems, must give place to the more perspicuous diction of his creatures. What has been inspired by his Spirit, and preserved entire and uncorrupted by his providence, for the instruction of men of all times and degrees, has been found, by a modern Papist, to be utterly unfit for that end. Desecration of the Word of God! What desecration can equal this? Impiety more daring can scarcely be found even in the coarse ribaldron attacks of infidelity. Infidels deny the Bible to be the Word of God, and consistently enough despise and deride it. Romanists believe it to be the Word of God, and yet prefer their own writings as books of religious instruction. But our opponents will perhaps tell us that we wrong them, in representing them as undervaluing the sacred Record; for that it is the deep wisdom and sacred mysteries which it contains, that in their opinion render it worthy of the character of God, and, at the same time, unfit for common perusal. Now, let us grant that the Bible is *full* of mysteries—a thing, however, which we do not believe—they must be there for some end. And for what end, if not for our salvation? But then, say our opponents,

if these mysteries be presented to you in the language of the Bible, they will be apt to be misunderstood and abused by you. They ought, therefore, to be presented in the guarded and express language of the Church. And is not this as much as to say that the language of the Spirit ought to undergo the revision and correction of the fleshly-minded, before it can be safely intrusted to our perusal; that God has not spoken so intelligibly and unexceptionably about what he alone thoroughly comprehends, as his erring creatures can do? Let them not say, then, that we wrong them by misrepresenting their opinions. Foiled in this attempt, to evade the force of our observations, they will perhaps turn round on us and tell us, that our remarks press with equal force against our commentaries and expositions; as they are all attempts to render what is obscure in Scripture more perspicuous and intelligible. But so long as these commentaries and expositions are not intended to take the place of Scripture; so long as they are not *authoritative* interpretations; so long as they are merely a declaration of the manner in which their respective authors understood the Word of God, our remarks apply not to them. There is none of our commentators or expositors who can, or does, assure himself, or his readers, that he has, in every instance, given the full meaning of the original, or that that meaning is better given by him than by the original. But infallible authoritative interpretation supposes both these things, and is therefore alone obnoxious to the absurdities and impieties already mentioned. Such, then, is the argument which our opponents derive from Scripture desecration—an argument which proceeds upon a principle which, if consistently adopted, would lead not merely to the withholding of Scripture, but to the withholding of the Gospel in any form, whether read or preached; nay, more, would lead to the annihilation of every sinful creature in the universe. Can an argument, then, founded on such a principle, be sound or conclusive? Our conviction is, that it cannot; and we shall therefore proceed to their second argument, which is, that scripture-prohibition is lawful and obligatory, because it preserves the unity of the Church.

Professing Christians have almost from the beginning been divided into numerous sects, which have all appealed to the sacred Record, in proof of their respective tenets; and this

division has been wholly attributed by Romanists to the reading of the Bible by the laity. That it is *because* the Bible was read by the laity that those divisions arose, we frankly acknowledge to be our opinion; but that they arose *out of* the Bible, had their foundation in it, or were otherwise attributable to it than as the innocent occasion of them, we cannot believe. They owed their existence solely to the state of mind in which the Bible was studied. It has been with it, as with every thing else that can exercise the faculties and interest the feelings of mankind—its statements have been the subject of controversy, and the occasion of strong party feeling. Yet these altogether originated in ignorance, prejudice, or self-interest, and in no degree in the Bible itself. This, then, is one important consideration necessary to be attended to. But let us see wherein the unity of the Church, so loudly contended for, consists, in order that we may see whether it be such a thing as requires means so extraordinary for its preservation. Is it a unity of profession merely, or is it a unity of sentiment and moral character? If it be the former, it cannot be a matter of so much importance as to require the prohibition of Scripture; for that unity which consists in outward profession, is perfectly compatible with internal dissension, hypocrisy, infidelity, and every sort of corruption. But if it be the latter, viz., unity of sentiment and moral character, this is perfectly compatible with some degree of difference in opinion, and indeed *must* be; for perfect accordance in matters of belief can never be expected from any *two* minds, not to speak of whole churches, or the whole of mankind in one church. As to the extent to which this difference may go, without violating christian unity, we have examples in the differences which *maintained* in the primitive Churches, and among the Apostles themselves. Paul quarrelled with Peter, and separated from Barnabas; yet who can deny that they were one in Christ. The christian Church among the Jews had institutions different from those of the Gentiles; yet they were both superintended by the inspired servants of our Lord. The members of the Church of Corinth had disputes concerning the eating of flesh offered in sacrifice to idols; yet those who adopted both sides of the question might, according to Paul's showing, be members of the body of Christ. Among the ancient fathers, *too*, there were frequent dissensions, such

as those between Irenaeus and Victor, Cyprian and Stephen, Chrysostom and Epiphanius, Jerome and Rufinus, Cyril and Theodoret. All these had violent dissensions one with the other, and sometimes on most important points too; yet all of them, we believe, are claimed as saints or fathers of the Romish Church. May there not, therefore, exist the same union in the members of the Church in modern times as there was in the ancient churches, though, like them, we be allowed the indiscriminate use of the Bible? Nay, does there not actually exist as much christian unity among the different sects of Protestants in this country, as ever there was in the Church of Christ, when of equal extent. What are the differences that subsist among us? Are they not rather external than internal differences, regarding rather the politics than the principles of religion? Do they not refer more to the manner in which Christianity may be best taught, than to that in which Christianity itself consists? and are we not all thus emulating each other in our zeal for the propagation of one and the same great cause? We are not sects professing different religions, as we are sometimes ignorantly or slanderously represented. We are, as it were, different regiments variously accounted for the fight of one and the same faith. Presbyterian and Episcopalian, Churchman, Relief-man, Seeder, Independent, Methodist, are all acknowledged to be one in Christ; and the only difference that subsists between them is, that each considers his party as having made the nearest approach to perfect obedience to the commands of Christ; and this apparent division, but real christian unity, is maintained not only in spite of the heretical practice of lay reading and interpretation of Scripture, but is entirely owing to it. This we conceive, to be a sufficient reply to the argument of our opponents now under review.

Were it not too great a trial of your patience, we might enlarge on the nature of that unity which Romanists arrogate to themselves as the result of scripture-prohibition. We might show, that though they be one in name, as all Protestants are, they are many in principle; that though they acknowledge one head, as all Protestants do, their ideas of his power are as various as the countries and communities to which they belong. We might also show the inefficiency of scripture-prohibition, as a

means of preserving unity, either nominal or real, in any christian community, unless it be unity in ignorance, in moral and religious degradation. But we must hasten to another argument, pertinaciously urged by our opponents—which is, that prohibition of Scripture prevents the unlearned from perverting it to their own destruction.

The arguments which we have now been considering, are usually urged in connexion with that text which says, that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation. The argument which is now to be considered has reference to that text from 2d Peter, which says, that in Paul's writings are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. Reverence for the Word of God seems to recommend the former argument; regard for the souls of men seems to recommend the latter. But that our reverence for revelation should not be so superstitious as to interfere with our duty of scripture dissemination, we have already attempted to evince; and that regard to the souls of men should not make us expose them to a tenfold hazard by withholding the Word of Life, we shall now attempt to evince. In doing this, we might pursue the same train of argument we have just now left. We might maintain, that were God to sanction the withholding of his Word, lest men should pervert it to their own destruction, he would contradict the whole course of his procedure towards us his dependent creatures. We might show, that were this principle consistently adhered to, every blessing of providence would be withdrawn, and misery or annihilation be our only portion. But this is already too plain to require illustration, and too cogent to require enforcement. The only remark we have time to make at present is, that if this argument be of any use at all, it is of use for a great deal more than Romanists desire; for if it be of any use to deprive the laity of the Bible, it is of use to deprive the Romish priesthood, nay, even his holiness the Pope, of the Bible. That their own priests have, in several instances, depraved the Bible, and that to their own destruction too, will be granted by all Romanists. The great Cardinal Bellarmine himself asserts, that "beyond all doubt almost all authors of heresies have been bishops or priests." That the Pope has, in more instances than one, done the same, the follow-

ing extract from Dr. Campbell's *Ecclesiastical Lectures* will strikingly manifest. "It is well known," says the Doctor, "that Pope Honorius was, after his death, by a council helden at Constantinople towards the end of the 7th century, commonly called the Sixth General Council, condemned as a heretic and an organ of the Devil, for holding the doctrine of the Monotholites. To this judgment the then reigning Pope, Agatho, consented, not only by his legates, but by the reception and approbation he gave to the decrees of that assembly. Also Leo II., Agatho's successor, declared his concurrence in the anathema pronounced by the Council against Honorius." This is one heretical Pope; we find another in the person of Liberus. This Pope, about the middle of the 4th century, when the Arian controversy was at its height, declared in favour of Arius, and excommunicated Athanasius, whom all the orthodox regarded as the patron and defender of the Catholic cause. This sentence he no doubt soon after revoked, and became so far a confessor in the cause of orthodoxy, that he underwent a long and severe banishment rather than lend his aid and countenance to the measures which the Emperor pursued for establishing Arianism throughout the empire. Yet, however firm and undaunted the Pope appeared for a time, he had not the magnanimity to persevere, but was at length, in order to recover his freedom, his country, and his bishopric, induced to retract his extraction—to sign a second time the condemnation of Athanasius, and to embrace the Arian symbol of Syrmium. Not satisfied with this, he even wrote to the Arian bishops of the East, excusing his former defence of Athanasius, imputing it to an excessive regard for the sentiments of his predecessor Julius, and declaring that now, since it had pleased God to open his eyes and show him how justly the heretic Athanasius had been condemned, he separated himself from his communion, and cordially joined their holinesses (so he styled the Arian bishops) in supporting Arianism as the true faith. From this it appears that the Pope has more than once supported heresy by means of Scripture, or at least in defiance of it, and has therefore depraved it. If then depravation of Scripture be a reason why it ought to be withheld, why allow his holiness to have it? Let our opponents be consistent, and either abandon their hypocritical plea of concern for the

souls of men, or let that concern extend to their spiritual Dictator. Let them have mercy on their spiritual Fathers, and free them from the hazardous task of perusing the Bible. But why spend your time and patience in confuting a thing so utterly absurd? Hazard in perusing the Bible! Who would have thought that such an idea could enter the mind of any one professing to be a Christian! How monstrous that it should be adduced for the purpose of restraining the study of Scripture! That mind must be utterly stript of rationality, or corrupted by hypocrisy, which, with a knowledge of what the Bible is, can pronounce it a dangerous book. If we suppose Romanists of a sound understanding, and free from satanic delusion, how shall we acquit them of the foulest hypocrisy? Hazard in perusing the Bible! Yes, there is hazard—hazard, lest it disclose the loathsomeness of the mother of abominations, her idolatry, her lies, her cruelties, her impieties, her union with the prince of darkness, her infamous traffic in the souls of men—hazard, lest her so long deluded votaries become sensible of their numerous wrongs, and, frenzied with their enormity, should make the cruelty and oppression of ages recoil on her guilty head. This is the hazard of scripture-perusal by the laity. And no imaginary hazard it is: for as sure as knowledge in the people is incompatible with tyranny in the rulers, so sure is unrestricted Bible-perusal incompatible with popish dogmatism and spiritual despotism. Well may Romanists deprecate every means of scripture-propagation—well may they try all the shifts of their crooked policy to silence this faithful monitor, whose *mene, mene, tekel, upharsin* ought at present to sound as dolefully and portentously in the ears of the prince of mystical Babylon as once they did in the ears of the prince of literal Babylon.

We have already said that this third argument of our opponents is usually adduced in connexion with a passage from 2d Peter iii. 16, which intimates, that in Paul's epistles "are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction." Concerning this passage, we remark, first, that there is not the smallest reference in it, direct or indirect, to the prohibiting of lay perusal of even Paul's writings, difficult though they be in some places. Secondly, we remark, that though obscurity may rest upon some

part of *Paul's* writings, yet the general character of Scripture is such, that he that runneth may read: "for the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a dis- cerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Thirdly, we remark, that the original of the term "unlearned," has been rendered by the term "unteachable," by some eminent critics. By the unlearned, Romanists understand the people in general as distinguished from the educated and enlightened, especially as distinguished from the clergy: whereas they ought to understand by it the unteachable both among the learned and the unlearned, the priesthood and the people. The classically and scientifically learned are not the most docile in spiritual matters; and this is not less true of the clergy than of the laity. But Catholics pretend not to say that the Scriptures ought to be withheld from the clergy. In this therefore we once more tell them they are called upon to vindicate, both to themselves and to us, the consistency of their conduct. In satisfying their own consciences they may possibly succeed; but as long as we believe the Bible to be the gift of a wise and merciful God, we cannot believe that the perusal of it can of itself, in any instance, incur the divine displeasure. Prejudice, passion, or interest, may lead a man to pervert Scripture to his destruction; let these then be the object of anathematizing prohibition: but simplicity, sincerity, and prayerful docility never will, and consequently no argument will convince us that we are permitted, far less by duty called upon to deprive a fellow-sinner of what is unalienably his own by divine bestowment. Though it is a fact that perdition is incurred by perversion of Scripture, it is also a fact, that perdition is incurred by lack of knowledge. It becomes us not to dogmatize in this matter; yet we cannot but express our fears that for every Protestant whom a licentious freedom with Scripture has brought to destruction, there are thousands of Papists and Protestants too for whom a culpable *ignorance* of Scripture has done the same. And not only is *ignorance* of Scripture a sin of the Papist; *perversion* of Scripture is a glaring one. Let him then take the warning which Peter intends to impart when speaking of Paul's writings, and not pervert the Bible to the unhallowed purpose of its own prohibition.

Such are the arguments which Romanists advance against indiscriminate perusal of Scripture by the laity; and such is the manner in which we would reply to these arguments. Let us now shortly advert to the question concerning the private *interpretation* of Scripture. This question is no doubt very much involved in the one already considered; but it is capable of separate discussion, and for the sake of perspicuity we shall briefly *give it* that discussion. What their views of private interpretation are, you must have already gathered from what has preceded. The Council of Trent, as you already know, have decreed that no man dare interpret Scripture contrary to the sense that the Holy Mother Church hath holden, and does hold, or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers. Beyond all controversy, this is authoritative interpretation in the fullest sense of the term. With regard then to this kind of interpretation, our first observation is, that it is contradicted by the whole analogy of God's former dispensations. Where, for example, is the authoritative interpretation of the book of nature and providence, whose intimations are as hard to be understood, and as liable to perversion as Romanists allege of Scripture, and much more so? Has not the book of nature been read by all nations and individuals indiscriminately, and has not each understood its language for himself? Monstrously perverted her declarations have no doubt frequently been; but by whom? by those who, like the Romish hierarchy, arrogated to themselves the power of authoritative interpretation. To whom, we ask, moreover, was committed the infallible interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures? Was it to the Doctors of the Law? those to whom Christ said, *Why do ye transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?* And to whom, if not to them, was such infallible interpretation committed? To none but to the Scriptures themselves; for they are the only infallible interpreters of themselves; and they are the most eminently such to him who is the most frequent violator of popish prohibition of Scripture. In no case, in former dispensations, did God command, or even *allow* one man to receive the decisions of another man's judgment when they were opposed to the deliberate decisions of his own mind. And would he do so in his last and clearest dispensation; and in the book too which enjoins every man to be fully persuaded in his own mind, and to be ready at all times

to give a reason of the hope that is in him? Mutually to assist each other in the search of truth, it is true, God requires of all; and he has for this purpose endowed them with powers of communication and powers of persuasion. But that any man should so far surrender that liberty with which his own personality and accountability have invested him, as to become one with any man or body of men in the objects of their faith, by doing violence to his understanding and moral freedom, this is what infinite wisdom never required, nor (to speak with reverence) could require, and at the same time make him accountable. In some cases, and for the maintenance of order and good government, he has commanded the *actions* of men to conform to the requisitions of their fellow-men in authority; but the mind he has left free from all human constraint, as being the subject of his single and immediate control. Even in the authority of the parent over the child there is no such mental jurisdiction as would deprive of the right of private judgment. In so far as the son is able to judge, he judges for himself, and not another for him. In the conduct of the understanding, the parent may assist by instruction, and recommend by his experience, but he cannot impose by his authority. In fact, were there any time or condition in life in which a rational being is required to surrender his understanding, for that time, and in that condition, he would cease to be accountable; for it is because he has an understanding and is allowed to exercise it that he is accountable. If it be a fact that God requires of Romanists implicit faith in the doctrines of Popery—*i. e.* if it be a fact that God allows Romanists to exercise their judgment only in so far as to have a mental perception of them, making their truth or falsehood none of their concern—then it must follow that Romanists are not accountable for the nature of those doctrines, and the practice to which they lead. They may be called to account for their obedience to the command of implicit faith; but the *nature* of that faith, and the practice which it requires, can never be subject of responsibility. If implicit faith be of God, he may punish the want of it, but he cannot punish the guilt incurred by the exercise of it; so that he who is a wicked man, but is an implicit believer, and wicked too because he is such, *must*, according to Romanists, be approved of by God; whereas, he who is a good man, but

a cautious believer, and good too because cautious, must be rejected by God. This is one absurdity which, in our opinion, adheres to implicit faith; the following is another, viz., that after God had inspired men to make a communication of his will, he should be obliged to inspire men to interpret that communication. Authoritative implies infallible interpretation, and infallible interpretation implies inspiration; so that the Church of Rome must either disown authoritative interpretation, or profess to be divinely inspired. But the former of these alternatives she does not adopt; she must therefore abide by the latter, which implies not a single but a twofold absurdity; for, besides the absurdity of supposing God to have inspired twice when once was sufficient, there is the absurdity of calling that an inspired communication of his will which is no communication at all; for how could Scripture be called a communication of God's will, which required inspiration to understand it?

But let us now attend to a statement by Dr. Milner. "In supposing our Saviour," says that author, "to have appointed his bare written word for the rule of our faith, without any authorized judge to decide on the unavoidable controversies growing out of it, you would suppose that he has acted differently from what common sense dictated to all other legislators; for when do we read of a legislator, who, after dictating a code of laws, neglected to appoint judges and magistrates to decide on their meaning, and enforce obedience to their decisions?" —End of Controversy, p. 84.

As this may be adduced as an argument in support of the *prohibition* of Scripture, as well as the authoritative interpretation of it, our first remark on this statement is, that this appointing of a judge does not *preclude*, but rather necessarily supposes universal perusal of the law by the governed. We know that all our legislative enactments are not universally known throughout the community in their written and printed form, but none surely will be so extravagantly foolish as to say, that they ought not to be so known; or deny that every individual has a right to become acquainted with them, in so far as it is within his power. There is indeed a liability to misunderstand and to violate them; but whether, let me ask, is this liability greater in the case of that man who reads and studies the law in its written and authenticated form, or in the case of that other man

who knows it not, except by the vague and partial intimations of it which he gets by occasional rumour?

But in reply to this statement by Dr. Milner, we remark, secondly, that there is an essential difference between legislation in matters of practice and in matters of speculation. Whilst in the former, for the sake of social order and happiness, a judge is appointed to decide on the meaning and enforce the enactments of law; with regard to the latter, he has no right to dogmatize, far less magisterially to threaten or inflict a penalty. Accordingly, while we have authoritative interpretation in law as enacted, we have none in law as a science. While we have authoritative interpretation in legislation, we have none in philosophy or theology. Any body of men may no doubt agree in adopting a certain system of religious opinions, and thus form a Church, exercising discipline on its members; but none has a right, unless by inspiration, magisterially to arbitrate between two opposing systems of religious doctrine. This belongs to God alone, and until he exercises his prerogative, short-sighted man cannot but differ from his fellow-men.

This argument of Dr. Milner is taken from analogy; and our third remark, therefore, is, that it is much safer to reason from the analogy of *God's* procedure than from *man's*; and in this question these two methods of procedure, with regard to law and its interpretation, are quite different. That *human* law has an appointed authoritative interpreter, is acknowledged. But did God, as we have already observed, ever appoint an authoritative interpreter of the law of nature or of providence? Who among ancient or modern heathens has been invested with that high prerogative? By far the greatest proportion as yet of the human race have lived and died under this law; but who amongst them ever received a commission of authoritative interpretation? If, then, the comparatively dark and ambiguous law of nature had no authoritative interpreter, does not analogy lead us to expect that the law of revelation would have none—would need none, especially when it is much clearer, more precise, and better adapted to every understanding.

But to bring this comparison of human and divine legislation by Dr. Milner to the touchstone of truth at once. Common sense, says the Doctor, has dictated to all legislators the propriety of appointing judges

to decide on their meaning. Be it so. Yet he surely will not deny that this appointment of judges is itself the subject of legislation—that in short these judges can point to some clause or clauses in the code of laws, as their authority for assuming the prerogative of judge. Now, in this question of authoritative interpretation of the law of revelation, what we want pointed out to us is, first, that clause or those clauses in the law of revelation, which inform us of the existence of an authoritative interpreter; secondly, who that interpreter is; thirdly, what are his powers. All these are absolutely necessary to be shown before we can assign to any fallible mortal the all-important, the divine prerogative of judging infallibly of religious truth and error. All these every judge of human law can satisfactorily exhibit; but any *one* of these, we defy the Church of Rome or any church on earth to exhibit. Shall we then be deemed unreasonable, when we refuse our assent to popish claims to authoritative interpretation until this challenge has been satisfactorily met? We know that a show of meeting this challenge is sometimes made by adducing such texts as these: "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;" "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;" but nothing short of real infallible interpretation will convince us that these have any thing to do with the present question. There are, however, some passages seemingly more pertinent, such as that promise of our Saviour: "The Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all the truth." But to whom, let me ask, were these words addressed? To the interpreters or to the writers of Scripture? To the writers unquestionably. No: not to one, but to both, the Romanist will say. And what is your proof of this, we ask the Romanist? We know of none which *he* adduces or *can* adduce. Our proof to the contrary is the following. In the first place, this promise refers to the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, and we are warranted to extend it in all its fulness of meaning to none except to those who can give evidence of such a descent having been made upon themselves.

We have no evidence that such a descent was ever made upon any member of the Romish Church, Pope, Priest, or Bishop, singly or collectively; to them, therefore, this promise cannot be applied. But again, the promise itself contains *internal* evidence that it cannot extend to any beyond the apostolic age; for it supposes them to whom it was made to have heard and conversed with our Saviour; for the promise was to teach them all things, and *bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever he had said unto them*. Let us have one or both of these two things, then, evidence of personal intercourse with Christ while here on earth, and evidence of Pentecost descent of the Holy Ghost, and then we shall grant the application of the promise and the possession of its high and holy privilege. Any thing short of this will not entitle us to infer authoritative interpretation in favour of any man or church on earth, from *this* passage of Scripture at least.

But that noted passage already adverted to, must now have a moment's consideration. "No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation," 2d Peter i. 20. Formerly, we showed that this could have no reference to the private perusal of Scripture. We shall now show that it does not prohibit the private interpretation of it. And for this purpose we remark, in the first place, that though we were to grant that every individual is not to be allowed to interpret the *prophetic* part of Scripture, this is no reason why he should not interpret the *other* parts of it. But, secondly, we remark, that the meaning put on this passage by our opponents is utterly irreconcileable with the injunction of our text, which is a plain and imperative command to all nations, as the first verse intimates, to search even the prophetic part of the sacred writings, (so it is that to which Isaiah refers,) in order that they might compare it with its fulfilment. And not only is it irreconcileable with the injunction of our text, it is utterly inconsistent with that commendation which Paul bestows on the Bereans, for bringing even his own teaching, inspired as it was, to the test of the word of God. Thirdly, we remark, that the Popish meaning put on the passage now under review, makes Peter, the author of it, contradict himself. For in the verse immediately preceding, he has these words, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that *ye* take heed, as unto a light shining in

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a dark place." Now, who are the *ye* whom Peter here addresses? They are all those, as we see, from the first verse of the Epistle, all those who had obtained like precious faith with himself. Can we then suppose that Peter, in one verse, would enjoin the whole body of Christians to whom he wrote, to give heed to the word of prophecy, as unto a light shining in a dark place, and in the very next verse contradict himself, by saying that that word was not to be interpreted by them? This would be unworthy of a fallible, not to speak of an infallible author. But, again, let it be remarked, that our English version of this controverted passage is not a correct one. This *must* be allowed, and *is* allowed by all qualified judges. However much we may differ as to its real import, and the manner in which it ought to be translated, all who are unprejudiced agree, that its meaning is not that which occurs at the first glance of the words. Its real meaning seems to be that which is given by the authorized version of the Romish Church, viz., That no prophecy of Scripture is its own interpreter. And this is enough for the confusion of the Romanist. The Vulgate, which his Church has decreed to be the only correct and authorized Scriptures, instead of saying, as our version and the Douay version say, "no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation"—says, that "no prophecy of Scripture is its own interpreter." So that this authorized translation by the Romish Church, makes not the smallest reference to private interpretation. Where then is now the support which this text seemed to give to the presumptuous arrogancy of the Romish Church in this matter of scripture-interpretation? Gone: "like the baseless fabric of a vision, it leaves not a wreck behind."

Such is the proof usually advanced in support of authoritative interpretation. Is it such, let me ask, as to satisfy any rational mind of any one's claim to so lofty a privilege? Express and unequivocal predication ought alone to satisfy us: but this is what will never be found as long as Scripture remains what it is: and therefore, neither the Romish nor any other Church can rationally lay claim to authoritative interpretation.

Thus, then, we have weighed in the balances, both of reason and of Scripture, Popish views concerning the private reading and the private interpretation of Scripture,

It remains for you to judge, each for himself, whether or not they have been found wanting. But, lest the strength of our argument should seem to rest in the weakness of that of our opponents, let the following be attended to, as the ground on which we vindicate the Protestant practice of unrestricted perusal and private interpretation of the sacred writings. Firstly, Private reading and interpretation are what the nature and design of the Scriptures require. Secondly, They were practised during the existence of the Jewish Church; and, what is more to our purpose, practised universally, most successfully, and without a breath of opposition during the first centuries of the Christian Church. Thirdly, Though attended with some evil results, (and what good is not attended with evil here below?) yet, these are not for a moment to be compared with the immense, the incalculable amount of good which is thereby produced. Fourthly, The hideous evils which have been the result of the prohibition and neglect of Scripture, form another argument in our defence. These two last arguments we might have illustrated at great length. We might have shown, had not our remarks already exceeded the bounds of patience and propriety, that to the disuse of scripture-perusal by the laity, are, in a great measure, to be attributed the ignorance, superstition and immorality of the dark ages; while, on the contrary, to the resumption of scripture-perusal by the laity, and by those who, though Papists, dared to think differently from the Church, and ultimately to spurn her authority—to scripture-perusal by such, is owing almost all that advancement in knowledge, both scientific and religious, which so eminently exalts the present above any former generation.

We said, and as now appears we trust said not unjustly, that Romanists cannot adduce one single passage directly or indirectly prohibiting the private reading and interpretation of Scripture. Let us now conclude by simply citing a passage or two expressly inculcating or recommending both. "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord and read," says our text, with a plainness which no casuistry can darken, with an authority which no man can resist with impunity. "The Bereans," says Luke, "were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and *searched* the Scriptures *daily*, whether those things were so." Acts

xvii. 11. "Search the Scriptures," or as it might be more correctly rendered, "Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." John v. 39. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things that are written therein," Rev. i. 3. We request your special attention to this last passage, for it connects a blessing with the reading of the darkest and most enigmatical portion of the word of God—a book, too, which the Spirit of God could not but foresee would be most frequently of all others perverted and abused. With this recommendation to the study of the most difficult, shall we need any further authority to persuade us to the study of the simple and obvious parts of Scripture? Is there here any fear of lay-perversion of the sacred oracles—any suspicious anxiety lest they be too much read and studied? Is there not every thing to the contrary?—An anxious solicitude that we should each come to this fountain of knowledge, purity, and spiritual joy? "Wherewithal," asks the Psalmist, "shall a young man cleanse his way?" "By taking heed thereto," he answers, "according to God's word." For "the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." "I have more understanding than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation." "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." We know of no way by which Romanists can evade the force of all these passages and the argumentation by which they were preceded, unless it be by the summary and not very satisfactory way of taking refuge in Church infallibility, and saying, as a Papist said a few days ago when reasoning with a Protestant: "Our Priest *must* be right: whoever is wrong, he *must* be right." We entered on this discussion with the view of ascertaining what *reason* and *Scripture* said on the subject. If any one receive as a de-

cision of infallibility what is contradicted both by reason and Scripture, he then makes God the *author* of confusion—exalts the Church above Divinity himself—believes the creature and *dis-believes* the Creator. But the Romanist, after all that has been said, will perhaps maintain that there is here no opposition between reason, Scripture and infallibility. If so, we beg him to reconcile reason, Scripture and infallibility with the following facts. Pope Sixtus Fifth, after setting aside the original Scriptures in Greek, published an edition of the vulgate, though full of gross errors, as the only true, genuine and authoritative Scriptures. This is *one* act of infallibility! But what did Pope Clement Eighth do? He discovered many great inaccuracies in the Bible of Sixtus, and published another edition professing to be purged of its inaccuracies, and yet confessed by Clement himself to be still imperfect! This is another act of infallibility—*infallibility against infallibility*, and both against reason and revelation, making God the author of confusion.

Exalting the Church above Divinity himself, and giving more credit to the creature than to the Creator. If infallibility like this be of avail to lessen, in any degree, the conclusiveness of the argument we have just now finished, our reasoning is at an end.

I am sorry, my friends, to have been obliged to detain you so long in proving what to every Protestant, and may I not add to every unsophisticated mind, must have all the certainty of axiomatic truth, viz., That what God has *sent* unto all, should be *possessed* and *perused* by all. But the cause of truth requires that we not merely form a demonstration of the truth, but that we silence, if possible, the gainsayer. And this last, you are aware, is almost always the more difficult task of the two. It is impossible for us to say that the silencing of the gainsayer has been, in the present discussion, in one instance accomplished; because, for this purpose, there must concur both sound argumentation and a docile and unprejudiced understanding. It has, however, been our endeavour to provide the former; it is yours to exercise the latter.

ADDRESS ;

DELIVERED ON THE 15th OCTOBER, 1833, AT THE INDUCTION OF THE REV. DAVID KING,
TO THE CHARGE OF THE CONGREGATION OF GREYFRIARS' CHURCH, GLASGOW,

By the Rev. WILLIAM BRASH,

One of the Ministers of the United Secession Church, Campbell Street.

MY DEAR BROTHER—In addressing you on the present occasion, I feel myself labouring under difficulties of no ordinary magnitude. The office which you have undertaken involves duties so sacred, and a responsibility so momentous, that an angel were insufficient for its discharge ; and to a full statement of these duties, and that responsibility, the powers even of an angel were inadequate. Of the topics which present themselves, the brief space of time necessarily allotted to this department of the public services, requires that we notice those which we do bring forward in a form so succinct, as greatly to diminish their apparent interest ; while there are others, regarding which the fact of your previous ordination may seem to supersede the necessity of very particular statement ; and others, again, connected especially with your private studies, which are better fitted for confidential communication, than for elucidation in this place. On these and other points, it must be gratifying to you to have the assurance, as it is gratifying to me to be able to give the assurance, that you may communicate fully with your fathers and brethren of this Presbytery, from whom you have just received the right hand of fellowship, which is, I believe, the sincere expression of their cordial welcome—with whom you will, I trust, long co-operate in the service of our common Master, in that spirit which becomes us all, who ought to merge every private consideration in one overmastering devotion of heart and life to Him ; and among whom, I may be permitted to add, you will find, I trust, the spirit of the Gospel, and of the ministry of the Gospel, exerting its hallowed influence on minds trained to the discipline of a liberal education ; our Church having wisely provided, that intrants on her ministry shall have previously passed through a regular educational course, regarding which she may safely challenge competition with any Church, confident that she will come out of the trial with at least equal honours—the men who may have dared in the face of day to insinuate the contrary, either knowing that they were giving wilful utterance to calumny, or, if ignorant of facts patent for a century as

the light of noon, to all conversant in the slightest degree with ministerial education, discovering an ignorance so imbecile as to disqualify them for being reputed judges on this, or on any subject requiring the smallest elevation above the prostrate regions of party prejudice.

Our blessed Saviour, “ when he ascended on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some, apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ : till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ : that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive”—evils, it is thus intimated, to prevent which the institution of office-bearers in the Church was demanded. Of these classes of office, the apostolic was not designed for transmission to successors, inasmuch as it required the direct appointment of the Saviour, and the prerequisite of the person appointed having seen the Lord. The prophetic, in so far as it implied a knowledge of futurity, ceased with the age of miracles. The office of evangelist has existed in the reformed Churches ; and it is not impossible that the increasing efforts to propagate the Gospel, may yet lead to the revival of a class of teachers whose province it was to organize churches in destitute places, and, as soon as these were organized, to remove and repeat their labours in some other desolate spot. The last office, that of pastors, or teachers, or presbyters, or elders, or bishops—for all these names designate one and the same set of office-bearers—comprehends the stated ministers to whom is committed the dispensation of doctrine, and, along with the elders who rule, of discipline and government. These presbyters the Apostles were careful to ordain in every city ; “ and they were ordained,” Scripture attests, “ by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery.” You

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see, then, my brother, the duties of your office—teaching, expository and catechetical—preaching—and the consistorial department, as it has been denominated, that which relates to discipline, and the duties of church courts, subordinate and supreme. As a teacher, you have to expound the oracles of God—exhaustless repositories of truth. As a preacher, you have to “beseech men, praying them, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.” As a consistorial divine, you have, in discipline, to avoid unfaithfulness on the one hand, and overstrained rigour on the other; in every other matter, to take heed that all things be done decently and in order, and that the churches—which are not isolated bodies, linked together by no bond of mutual dependence, but members of one great body, in which “the hand has no right to say to the foot, I have no need of thee, nor the foot to the hand, I have no need of thee”—may have rest and be edified. How arduous such a charge! Mankind are ignorant, slow to learn, full of opposition to the truth; you have to detect error and convey truth, as a “scribe himself well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom, and apt to teach.” Mankind are perishing, and believe it not; you have to tell them, even weeping, that of those “who walk as enemies of the Cross of Christ, the end destruction.” Never had orator such themes. You have to unfold the attributes of the Great God, and ask, Who would not love and fear Him? You have to appeal to the rational and immortal nature of the human soul, and ask, “What is a man profited, though he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” You have to expatiate on the person, the offices and the work of the Son of God, and ask, Who will refuse Him who comes in the name of the Lord to save? You have to announce the horrors of endless woe, and ask, Who would not shudder to brave their infliction? You have to point to the blessedness of everlasting rest, the crowns, the harps and white robes of the ransomed, and ask, Who would not join their happy family, where death can no more destroy, and sin and sorrow no more injure? You have to “warn every man, and teach every man,

in all wisdom, that you may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus;” and you place yourself under a responsibility which might make the strongest spirit quail, if viewed apart from the promises of the divine word. For it cannot be concealed, that the ministry of the Gospel stands apart from all other occupations in the overwhelming magnitude of the results connected with it, either for good or for evil. The unskilfulness or unfaithfulness of the lawyer may bring worldly ruin on many families; the errors of the physician may endanger multitudes of lives; those of the statesman may abridge the civilization, the happiness and the freedom of millions; but, excepting in so far as all, or any of these indirectly influence religion, the results are temporal, and, like all things temporal, admit of calculation. It is far otherwise with the incapacity or unfaithfulness of him who takes charge of the spiritual and eternal interests of his fellows. If he “shall preach another gospel, which is not another;” if he shall be “a blind leader of the blind;” if he shall say “peace, peace, when there is no peace;” if he shall “shun to declare the whole counsel of God;” the consequences are as diversified as are the destinies of the human soul, as boundless as is the duration of eternity. He perishes indeed himself, but he perishes not alone: he has involved in his doom the hundreds, or the thousands, who followed him as their guide to immortality, whom he has hindered from entering the kingdom of heaven, has allured to other and fatal paths, and who must for ever reproach him for the agency which he has had in accelerating and confirming their own tendencies, in themselves alas! too powerful, to allow “the harvest to be past, the summer to be ended, while they were not saved.” Assuredly when we, and such as we, are put in trust with the Gospel, we must be insensible indeed, if we adopt not with our whole hearts the apostolic exclamation, “Who is sufficient for these things?” and we ought to feel deeply, that if we succeed in “saving our own souls, and them who hear us, the treasure is put into earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”

(To be concluded in our next.)

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THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 28TH DECEMBER, 1833.

SERMON by the Rev. WILLIAM MUIR, D.D., Edinburgh. | Price :
LECTURE by the Rev. THOMAS M'CRIE, D.D., Edinburgh.

ADDRESS ;

Delivered by the Rev. WILLIAM BRASH.—Continued.

THE Gospel is a system of means, and of means adapted with admirable skill to the production of an end. The ministers of the Gospel require talents—some of them natural, some of them acquired. It is not too much to say that the best order of human minds should be dedicated to this office—that order which combines vigorous judgment with pure and generous emotion, and which possesses the faculty of communicating readily thoughts and impressions to other minds. Whatever may be said in favour of ordinary abilities being sometimes coupled with usefulness, it is certain, that the Church has, at different periods, suffered greatly from defect of talent in her ministers; and that the office requires all the ability and all the energy which any man can bring to bear. But the possessor of these must be a believer. Without piety, it is monstrous in him to exercise these hallowed functions. He should be possessed of sincere piety before entering on the office; and the keeping alive and promoting his own personal piety ever afterwards is an object of which he should not for a moment lose sight. He must be a man of prayer. Prayer keeps up the communication with heaven; on its wings must his teaching, and preaching, and labours, be wafted home to men's hearts. Thus has God, with whose Spirit is the increase, ordained; and even the reflective influence of prayer is vitally necessary to the minister, whose professional habits, it cannot be disguised, will otherwise render him so familiar with the Gospel, that he will mingle in its most affecting ordinances with personal indifference. He must be a man of heavenly spirit. It is ordained that he

live by the Gospel; and his maintenance should be such as to set his mind free from distracting cares, in order that he may give himself wholly to his ministry, living and labouring for eternity. A worldly disposition, a covetous heart, or a love of show and levity, how improper in any man, how despicable in a man of God! He must cultivate a meek and patient spirit. "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, patient, in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves." He must cultivate a brotherly spirit. When brethren "bite and devour one another," good men grieve, and bad men deride. The moral assassin, who will insinuate slander, and take up a reproach to do hurt to his brother—of him he will say, "My soul, come not thou into his secret, to his assembly mine honour be not thou united." He must cherish a zeal rising above the pleas of indolence, and the suggestions of selfish policy. He has his Master's example, who "went about doing good," and whom "the zeal of God's house even consumed." His labours should be abundant; not, indeed, that he is warranted to ruin his health, which by reckless inattention to the limits of his duties could very soon be accomplished, in a profession of which Luther said truly, "the labours of the ministry exhaust the marrow from the bones, and hasten old age and death;" and we must avoid, in inculcating obligations, the error justly charged on the christian fathers, and many christian moralists, of neglecting to define the boundaries of each duty, and pushing it so far that it encroaches on the legitimate sphere of some other department; yet,

within the limits prescribed by other duties, the minister of Christ must "be instant in season and out of season, must reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." The sick and the dying will turn to you, my brother, their looks of eagerness; you will guard them against false peace, and, when you can, will rejoice in their faith. Institutions for the spread of the Gospel at home and abroad will present themselves for your co-operation; you will join your brethren in holding forth the word of life, that the missionary and the catechist may be set in motion, and thus you may be sowing the seed, of which our Saviour has said, "The seed grew while the husbandman slept." There is prudence required also, that you may walk wisely; self-denial, that you may seek not your own, but the things which are Jesus Christ's; a sincere love for the souls of your people, that you may take that cordial interest in their welfare, which will make your ministry a pleasure, not a drag. There is required—but time would fail us: read, and frequently, the epistles to Timothy and Titus, they present an inspired manual for the christian minister.

There is another view to be taken of ministerial qualification: it should be progressive. He who is ordained to the ministry, is presumed to have laid, in his previous habits and acquirements, the foundation on which he is to erect the well-earned reputation of a workman who needeth not to be ashamed; but it cannot be reasonably expected that he has done much more than is implied in laying such a foundation. In order that he may grow in gifts and graces, he ought to retain the habits of a student, and of a laborious student, in that adaptation which his circumstances will point out to his duties, as now a man of active life. It has been said, in allusion to the presumed advance of knowledge in the present day, that a minister should keep pace with the knowledge of the age. Keep pace with the knowledge of the age! He should keep far a-head of that knowledge. For, what is the knowledge of the age, but the tardy following, by the community at large, of knowledge struck out long before by men who are often a century in advance of the opinions of the multitude? I am far from saying, that every minister of the gospel should aim at being himself one of those master spirits who impress the stamp of their own minds on generations follow-

ing; such men are rare, and their province is peculiar. I am equally far from affirming that he should even aim at being one of that secondary class of spirits who can discern the signs of the times, and ride foremost on the next advancing wave of public opinion; such men are too frequently the slaves of party, or the architects of their own aggrandizement. But this I do say, that the minister of the gospel should be a man of correct, and varied, and extensive knowledge—no sciolist—no weakling—no specimen of grave and solemn inanity on the one hand, or of inflated and tawdry affectation on the other—but a man of sound, manly, fervent piety, sanctifying the learning of the scholar and the urbanity of the man of gentle manners. He must progressively advance in self-cultivation that he may exemplify all this; and his self-cultivation will reflect incalculable benefits on his flock and on the Church at large. "Covet earnestly," says the Word of God, "the best gifts."

I need not remind you, my brother, that you must not be partial in your ministry. You are the minister, not of few select families, but of this congregation. While you endeavour to discharge your duties to all, without respect of persons, suffer me to remind you of the young. You are yourself young, and the young will look to you with especial interest: let them not look in vain. Among them you may expect especially the seals of your ministry. Youth is the great season for conversion to God; and no labours will be productive of more happiness to yourself, or more solid and lasting usefulness, than your labours among the young. Suffer me to remind you of the important field to be occupied in pastoral visits. But, I merely name these, and omit two other branches of inquiry: the discouragements of the christian ministry, and the causes of partial failure and circumscribed success.

I am not here to give flattering titles to any man, whether living or departed. If living, his own works will praise him in the gates; if departed, by them being dead he will yet speak. This much, however, I may be permitted to say: I remember distinctly the two who were your immediate predecessors in this charge; I have heard repeatedly at the bed-sides of the sick and dying, of the men by whom they were preceeded; I have met your own parent as a minister of the word; I now look on you.

These men are no more here; your day of labour, at the longest, will soon come to a close—and then is the account of your stewardship. The mind recoils from the idea of a minister of the gospel condemned, undone. It turns eagerly to the prospects of a servant good and faithful, welcomed to the joy of his Lord. May this joy, my brother, be yours; may it be the joy of us all! “I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and of Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment, without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

It remains shortly to address this congregation.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN—We are witnesses, and God also, that a solemn relation has this day been constituted. It is a covenant, in which your minister is the one party—yourselves form the other. He has pledged himself by his acceptance of your Call; you have pledged yourselves by your adherence to that Call—as all who shall join the Church under his ministry come in under similar obligation. “Obey,” says Scripture to the Churches, “them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.” Your duty is to maintain the gospel; doing, each in his place, what he can, “that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified.” You are bound to wait on the ministry of your pastor. On the stated hours of public worship, it is as truly the duty of each of you to be in his place, as it is of your minister to be in the pulpit. If he were absent without just cause, and none to fill his place, your surprise would be extreme; and if any of you, without sufficient reason, leave his seat vacant, not surprise merely should be felt—the conduct is culpable. True, there may be reasons justifying the absence of a private member of the Church, which will not justify that of the minister. True, there may be individuals, and classes of individuals, exposed to causes occasioning greater or less irregularity of attendance. We speak not of such cases in which the absence is either involuntary, or arises from adequate reasons; but we hold it to be incontrovertible, that causeless absentecism, either habitual or occasional,

is criminal, and, like all other crimes, is fraught with danger;—it tends to dishearten your minister—to weaken his hands; it throws you out of the way of the very message which, on that particular occasion, might have come with especial adaptation to your own ease—and it springs from spirit, it may be of levity, it may be of coldness bordering on partial unbelief; it tends to perpetuate this spirit, and to bring over the soul the iciness of spiritual torpor.

You are bound to love your minister, “esteeming him very highly in love for his works’ sake.” The congregation is a species of family—he is your common spiritual father. When I say there ought to be mutual love between parties thus situated, I mean what I say. There is not for any individual, there is not for any household, a more dangerous matter than to regard with indifference the minister to whom is committed the distribution to them of the bread of life. Experience has proved how disastrous it has been to the spiritual interests of the young, where their parents have, by word or example, fostered indifference, or any absence of cordial regard for him who was their spiritual guardian. Oh! could the declensions of many a family be traced, they would be found to originate in sources contaminated here. Rally then around your minister with honest christian affection. He cannot expect equally to please all; were he slavishly to attempt this, he would succeed in pleasing none whose approbation was worth possessing, least of all Him whose approbation he is bound to seek before every thing; you will therefore not expect too much personal attention—not insist too pertinaciously on frequent and assiduous visits, when no call of providence specially demands, nor, even when trouble does assail, will you tax his time and labour too severely; you will forbear with him, also, giving him latitude in his individual opinions, where they may not, on points involving no principle of conscience, exactly quadrate with your own, extending to him that liberality of construction which you claim and expect for yourselves.

Say we these things as tacitly implying censure or suspicion of this congregation? From considerable knowledge of you, I believe candidly, that there is not in the range of our Church, a congregation or session who will strive to redeem their pledges more honourably than you will. But the best are ever the humblest. And when

you carry your own wants, and the utterance of your hearts, before a throne of grace, you will not forget him "who is over you in the Lord." One word more. Your minister has no such charge of any one of you, as that individual has of himself; no such charge of any family amongst you, as the parents of that family have of the souls whom God has intrusted to their oversight. You cannot shift your own responsibility. If your minister deliver his own soul, the consequences of negligence or unbelief rest with you. And, if you "labour for the meat which perisheth," what should be done for "that which endureth to everlasting life!" The hearer of the gospel who shall desecrate the ordinances of Christ by mingling in them as mere customary observances—or as passports to reputation—or as means of temporary excitement and intellectual gratification, indulged in as species of refined amusement—who employs them not for their legitimate purposes, that he may know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent," that he may be "the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," that he may "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," and that, "built up in our most holy faith, he

may have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, shining as a light in the world," blessed in himself, and a source of the purest blessings to others; how must such an individual be agonized with remorse on a retrospect of his infatuation, when he discovers, too late, that having failed to give earnest heed, he has come short of eternal life! Better it had been for that man that he had lived and died in the darkness of heathenism; nay, better that he had never been born. For if the men of Nineveh and the men of Sodom shall rise in the judgment against the men of that generation which rejected the personal ministry of the Saviour, and shall condemn them; shall they not rise against us who enjoy the completed canon of revelation, and the ministry of those of whom the Saviour has said, that receiveth you receiveth me, and he despiseth you despiseth me," if, as to us, this ministry shall labour in vain, and spend its strength for nought, and in vain? Brethren, may we hope better things of you, and things accompanying salvation! May your minister prove to none of you a savour of death unto death; but "a sweet savour of Christ in you believing, a savour of life unto life!" Amen.

THE IMPEDIMENTS TO THE RIGHT CELEBRATION OF RELIGIOUS ORDINANCES;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THE AFTERNOON OF SUNDAY, 20th OCTOBER, 1831.

By the Rev. WILLIAM MUIR, D.D.,
Minister of St. Stephen's Church, Edinburgh.

"They have no delight in it."—JER. vi. 10.

You will readily admit, that the feeling of delight accompanying the performance of any thing is, for the most part, a sign and measure of its profitable accomplishment. You will admit at once, that that is usually well done which is done cheerfully and with the heart; and that nothing, on the contrary, is more commonly deteriorated in the performance of it, than what is entered on with the apprehension of its being a piece of drudgery, and gone through as a mere task. How true does this remark hold in the department of religion! Religious exercises, in order that they may profit us in the performance of them, ought to have the concurrence of the will. In truth, religious exercises are void of all meaning to

us, unless our souls go along with them. They are subservient to at least only an inferior degree of benefit, unless they are engaged in, not only from a conviction of their importance, but also from a feeling of their excellence which causes us to have delight in them. If we approach the exercises of religion, whether they be reading or hearing the Word, or the sacraments, or prayer, as formalists come to them, or even with a state of mind not so obnoxious as that described in the text—if we take no lively interest in them—if we attend to them without cherishing sentiments of devotion towards their object—if we are actuated merely by the force of custom, the power of example and other motives of expediency, how can

they ever profit us? Are we not changing the sources of heaven's blessings into empty and broken cisterns? Are we not changing the very wells of salvation into what is poisonous and deadly to the soul that ventures to draw out of them? These questions cannot fail to bring to the memory of every one of us, what the Bible denominates the sins of our holy things. We are often very far from being right-minded in the services of religion. How very frequently have we to confess, in looking back on our celebration of christian ordinances, that we have not had any delight in them, nor even that we have been desirous of receiving any thing from them! What, I ask, have many of us known from experience of the force of those expressions in which the Psalmist unfolds his mind to us? "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." Alas! have we not often taken part in divine services ignorantly or inattentively listening to words about which we have never seriously employed our minds; or if occasionally we have directed our thoughts to the words we uttered, yet how very soon have we diverged from them, and diverged very widely? Yes, my friends, even when we have actually endeavoured to fix our hearts on religious objects, and begun to feel something of their delightful influence, still must we not deplore how unstable are all our purposes, and how soon are cooled our warmest affections? Acknowledging, then, the aggravated sins of our holy things, we have to beseech now our God not to try us by any of our performed duties, but to accept of us simply through the atonement of our High Priest, and to receive even our best services only through his merits.

Such reflections as these may lead us to enter more particularly on a subject fitted for self-examination and serious instruction—for that self-examination which shall bring us to the test, and for that instruction which may open up to us some of the sources of the evil complained of in the text, and guard us against its inroad. And with this design, I shall, first, consider some of the circumstances that may operate to take away from us delight in the christian ordinances, and, secondly, how we ought to resist and counteract their influence.

And, first of all, in attending to the circumstances that operate to take away from us delight in christian ordinances, we ob-

serve, that an unfavourable change in the frame of mind, as persons are engaged in religious exercises, often occurs, at least at times occurs, unavoidably, however our desires and endeavours may be set against it. To prevent misconception, I explain my meaning. There are certain peculiarities of constitutional temperament which each of us possesses, which will, when acted on by certain unlooked for causes, occasion lamentable alterations in the state of our powers and feelings. At one time we will be attending with deep earnestness, at another time listening with cold indifference. There is now a great acuteness in receiving instruction, at another time almost a deadness that blunts the edge of the best directed observations. One day we are conscious of a glow of sensibility which warms the soul, expanding it and giving it quick and energetic influence, that seizes and embraces divine truth with fervour; and at another time, the capacity of the mind almost seems to be reduced, and every thing that is good appears to be carried away. Now, all such changes as these are still, in so far as they are traceable to constitutional temperament, to be ranked among the class of what the Bible calls our infirmities, and when they are met by meditation on the Word of God, and by prayer, in order that we may be cured, they are not charged as criminalities against us. At the same time, my brethren, take good heed lest you ascribe to those things over which you think you have no control, what all the while springs from sinful negligence.

Again, in attending to the causes which operate to take away from us delight in christian ordinances, I think it necessary to state, that there may be ascribed not a little, at times, to the ineffectiveness, or culpable or sinful negligence of us who are appointed to conduct these services for you. It is not to be wondered at that we are not always in the same state for conducting these. In every ministerial charge where much duty is assigned, we cannot be uniformly alike fitted for guiding the devotions of our people, or for giving them appropriate instructions. Alas! though we had all our time unbroken, and at our own command, for the performance of our duty, how inadequate would it be for the proper discharge of the functions of our office; how defective all we appear to do before that Being who is possessed of every possible perfection! And, indeed, a person placed in the situation I

now occupy, would utterly despair of promoting the high end of his appointment, did he not bear continually in mind these words of our Shorter Catechism, It is neither from any virtue in the ordinances themselves, nor in him that doth administer them; but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them, that they become the means of salvation. Still we do frankly admit to you, that our defective modes of conducting the services of religion, may often prove a great obstruction to their success among you; but then we, the ministers of religion, while we ought to examine ourselves carefully, are still found to exhort our people to be continually on their guard, lest they put away from themselves the blame of an evil that is to be laid altogether on their own want of preparation. Surely I am not wrong in declaring to you, that even those ministers, not the most gifted for their work, do still, by their prayers and their preaching, render their people highly responsible for spiritual improvement. Though their style and manner may be met with indifference, or even censure, yet they do bring forward those truths in which the salvation of man is involved; and, perhaps, there is no discourse from which their flock might not draw useful reflections, and hear a great deal more truth than the generality of hearers have either received or followed. Let them examine the precise amount of their spiritual improvement under those teachers of whom they highly approve. Have those prayers, which they allow to be devout and scriptural, had the effect of rendering them who join in them more pious? Have the sermons which they confess to be sound in doctrine, and acceptable in style, rendered them more humble, more devout, more devoted to Christ? What have we gained though the fervour or ability of the servant of Christ may draw forth a remark from them in the way of encomium? What have we gained if the result stop at this—if the conscience of the man who has been tracing the argument of the discourse from its commencement to its close, remain unaffected—if the heart of the man who is listening to prayer remain untouched by a kindred flame? Oh! let me tell you, that the service of this place has effected its purpose only when you go away, not thinking at all of the sinful being who conducts it, but examining into the state of your own souls, and hastening into

your chambers, praying as the publican prayed, and like him resolving against every sin. You will have no difficulty in confessing, that were this the frame of your minds in attending the public ordinances of religion, they would seldom be engaged in without utility. I still admit, that those unfavourable changes which we cannot altogether avoid, or the occasional glaring defects of those who conduct the services of religion, may diminish its effect; yet if we actually possess and cherish a serious frame of mind, how effectually does it screen us from the charge of the text, “They have no delight in it.”

Now, to be more particular, the want of this serious frame of mind is necessarily connected with two things which I now mean to place before you. If we wanted this serious frame of mind, it shows that there has neither been due consideration with us previous to our coming to religious services, nor that there is much attention to these ordinances when they are going on. I say, first, that the state of mind I have described, shows that there has not been with us due consideration before we have come to the public ordinances of religion. We do not consider that the services of the sanctuary relate to God in our adoring, or praising, or supplicating Him whom the universe celebrates as its Maker, whom angels, principalities and powers reverently worship—we do not consider that the services of the sanctuary are the appointed means through which the soul is called to discourse with its own original, with Him who is the source of bliss. We do not consider that the services of the sanctuary present the sublimest objects for the exercise of the understanding, the most splendid for attracting the imagination, the most engaging for affecting the heart. We may, indeed, *acknowledge* that such is the character of the services of the sanctuary, but we do not *feel* that it is so; we are not seriously considering that such is their character; we do not bring ourselves, at the approach of the Sabbath, to think that we are now entering on that very day which by his moral and unchangeable law God has set apart for himself; we do not reflect that it is appointed for the commemoration of the great works of creation and redemption, that it is to be consecrated to the honour of him who formed us by the word of his power, and redeemed us by the gift of his Son. Accordingly we do not, in our peti-

tions implore that fixedness of heart which is required in the true and spiritual worshipper; we do not enter the sanctuary cherishing the serious thought that we come hither to seek the blessings which the mercy of the Saviour gives to every one who feels his need of them, and asks them. On the contrary, we come to the sanctuary altogether unconcerned; we sit down without offering in our minds one preparatory petition; we possess a frame of mind that is akin to levity; we are chargeable at least with indifference, which can only be excusable in our waiting on an empty ceremonial. Is not this an apt representation of the usual habits of multitudes? Their observance is restricted to the Sabbath-day, and to that small section of it which finds them within the walls of the church. They have been hurried on by a flood of worldly cares and pleasures during the week; and can we imagine that they are to find the Sabbath free from the intrusion of the world's thoughts—that these thoughts are then to retreat before their minds, or that they themselves are at once to be abstracted from all they have left behind, and undisturbed to apply themselves to the services of the sanctuary? If we imagine all this, we show that we are grossly ignorant of the influence of mental associations, and, above all, of the native corrupted bias of our hearts. Every one among us is very deeply to be sympathized with, who is anxious to engage in religious ordinances, and is, at the same time, over-pressed with the cares of the world. It is a great struggle he is engaged in—a virulent contest which his spiritual foes carry on with malignity against him. But that man is well assured that he must persevere in the contest—that, like Moses on the mount, he must keep his hands always raised, lest the Amalekites prevail—that therefore he must resist the encroachments of the world, not only on one day, but on every day of the week. He knows well that no imagination is so vain as the thought, that, after consuming all the portions of the week except one in the world, he may still be employing the seventh, or only part of it, in resisting the influence of sin, in cultivating the seeds of holiness and the blessed fruits of religion.

Even allowing that the individual still possesses some desire to receive the benefits of religious ordinances in the sanctuary, they are rendered quite impracticable to him, except where the devotional exercises

of every day are preparatory to those of the Sabbath. The want of serious consideration before we come to engage in religious ordinances, leads directly, as I would now request you to consider, in the second place, to want of due reflection when engaged in the performance of them; for such trains of thought as we have been cherishing, are not easily broken down, and, in fact, we cannot authoritatively dismiss them—they have fastened themselves by innumerable links to the mind, and though many of these links may from time to time be detached by us, still numbers are left which are quite sufficient to rivet the objects of our affectionate concern to our memories and our hearts. Such objects, through long usage, become great favourites with the mind, and hence, it not only attends to them in the season of disengagement from other things, but strives to get back to them, even when occupied in the ordinances of religion. Our favourite thoughts so frequently recur to the mind, to their own channels, as it were, (and deep channels too,) that they often flow in upon other subjects which we desire to keep separate from all extraneous admixtures. Then when we think how base and degraded our natural dispositions are, surely it is a most unreasonable expectation that we are prepared for the spiritual exercises of the Sabbath, if we have had no preparatory devotional exercises for such a day. What is the experience of the people of God themselves—of those who endeavour actually, when in the world, to cherish the affections that rise above the world, and to whom every day brings its own services, and seasons of piety? Have they not still to lament that, amid the duties of the sanctuary, they are often surprised by those that do not belong to them—that they often have passed through a long train of such thoughts before they had called on themselves to repress the tendency to them; yea, that they have actually been found to be encouraging them? And if such be too often the experience of those who have indeed been seriously preparing themselves for the public ordinances of religion, what is to be expected of those who approach to these ordinances destitute of such feelings? Can it be supposed, that they will readily enter, or enter at all into spiritual views and devotional sentiments? Alas, how soon do the thoughts of religion pass away when such wanderings of the heart after the world are encouraged! Though the body of the man is in the

church, his soul is elsewhere. The lips may utter thanksgiving for benefits, yet the heart is only after some remembrance of past favour, some opening glimpse of temporal good. He has no delight in it, and thus his carelessness on the subject previous to his coming to the sanctuary, throws all its miserable effects into his observance of its ordinances. Now, in this discourse, I go no further than to call your attention to the union of these two things—the want of serious consideration before we engage in religious ordinances; and, as its necessary result, the want of attention to them when employed in them, as forming a great source of that feeling of uneasiness, or of aversion, which the text is intended to expose. With such causes as these, it will be impossible to prevent lassitude and disgust. What then can there remain but the mere form of religion which we go through, because the custom of society around us, external decency, or some other superficial motive, urges us to it? It is mere bodily service, no relief being given to the mind; and how then should the ceremonial be aught but irksome?

Most serious and grievous is the evil of which I am now speaking. Whatever degree of it adheres to us its tendency is to destroy utterly the capacity of religious feeling, and to increase that scaredness of conscience which is the forerunner of open profligacy. Let us then be roused to consideration. Let us come to religious ordinances with serious thoughts on their nature, their reasonableness, their awful sanctions, and their inestimable utility; and, having especially in view the example of the serious worshipper who prays for the spirit of prayer, and who is a suppliant in private for the grace of supplication which is to be employed by him in public, let us endeavour when we join in religious ordinances to preserve seriousness of mind. Let us for this purpose devoutly consider the object we have in view, whether engaged in the Word, in sacrament, or in prayer. Let us not give a single moment's encouragement to thoughts upon other subjects. Let us withstand the inroads of such thoughts—let us cast them out as of Satan, when they enter, and let us try to prevent them entering at all. If these favourite suggestions have led us wrong on former occasions, let us give them no quarter now: they must be repelled without a moment's parley. Whenever the mind feels a tendency to wander let us

implore the assistance of the Divine Spirit. Let there be prayer, consideration and serious concern; and thus entering into the great truths, into the sweetness of religion, there will be no longer felt the weariness with which we set out. The satisfaction and delight, so conducive to our improvement, will then take the place of the fatigue and irksomeness of the mere bodily worshipper. The Sabbath will be the most acceptable of all refreshments, the Psalms of the sanctuary will be the sentiments of gratitude and joy, the prayers offered will be as the flame which first ascended in holy ardour to its origin, and the Word will be the principal vehicle of calling into action every good resolution. Religion will then become that very privilege it is intended to be; the elements, set upon the table, will appear as the memorials of all that is dear and precious to our souls; the sentiments of holy love will be awakened in commemorating the blessed Friend who gave his soul for us sinners; and thus the sanctuary and its services will become the pledge to us of the noblest benefits, the scene of the most glorious hopes, and an incitement to devoted obedience. Yes, meaning will then be given to those subjects and those services which, to the eye of sense, seem but mere formalities. Then will the preparation of a meditative and serious retirement, united to attention to public ordinances, by the blessing of God, prove at once salutary and delightful, and then will we have heartfelt and blessed experience of those words of the Psalmist, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. A day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord God is a sun and shield." O that the giver of grace and glory may grant unto us, his worshippers, that he may visit us from on high with the merciful and healing influence of the Spirit—that he may forgive our many distractions of thought, our many wanderings of affection in his service—that he may cleanse what is polluted, enlighten what is dark, and revive what is sick and faint within us—that our retirement may become to us a sanctuary of holiness preparing us for the service of his house, and that our delight in the service of his house may be advancing us in

the grace that is to end in glory. Come, then, let us seek the precious influence, and live in the power of the Spirit of God with renewed earnestness. The solemnities of our Communion Sabbath are now approaching, and let us be prepared to meet these with humble and devout hearts. Be ours the prayer of the soul pouring itself forth into the bosom of God's own Son. Be ours the entreaty of the faith that entreats and beseeches, and will not let the Angel of the Covenant go till he leave a blessing behind him. Such are the sentiments that become a Communion Sabbath and the table of

Jesus. Let us pray, therefore, that we may be able at all times, then more especially, to worship God in spirit and in truth. Let us implore, each for himself, and all of us for one another. Let the pastor, unworthy as he is to pray for himself, cease not his supplications, that the dew of Sion may descend where his beloved flock feedeth. And as you have any concern for him who is appointed to minister to you, lift you up the prayer that speaks of what he speaks, and implore for him spiritual blessings from his Master. Now to God the Father, be glory, &c. Amen.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD;

A LECTURE DELIVERED ON THE FORENOON OF SUNDAY 6th OCTOBER, 1833, IN THE ORIGINAL SECEDERS' CHURCH, RICHMOND STREET, EDINBURGH, FROM LUKE xiii. 1-

By the Rev. THOMAS M'CRIE, D.D.,

Author of the *Life of John Knox*, *Life of Andrew Melville*, &c., &c.

In our last lecture we found Jesus reprobating the men of that generation for their blindness with respect to the character of the time in which they lived, and addressing to them this solemn admonition, "When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him." An address expressed in similar words occurs in the sermon on the Mount, and then it seems to have had particular reference to law-suits, suggesting to us an advice to be speedily reconciled to those with whom we may be at variance. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." A person given to litigation is a bad member of civil society; and it is not easy to say whether he creates greater vexation to himself or to those who are about him. Every true Christian cultivates a forgiving and reconciling disposition; and it is his desire and endeavour, if it be at all possible, to live peaceably with all men. In lesser matters, and where his duty to his family or the public does not impose resistance, he will rather suffer what is wrong than revengefully resent what is done to him. Even in places where justice is

administered without any wilful negligence or culpable violation of principle, the uncertainty of law has become a proverbial expression; and yet there are persons who, from a strange and unaccountable disposition to litigation, have persisted in going to law till they have at length gone to beggary and ruin. There are others again, who, by obstinately refusing in time reasonable offers of accommodation, have been obliged at last to satisfy the original demand with heavy damages. Every good man will be disposed to pay his just debts when in his power; and common prudence dictates, that demands, though appearing to us heavy and oppressive, if according to law, ought to be satisfied. Consider well ere thou refusest thy creditor's legal claims, "lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee thou shalt not depart thence till thou hast paid the very last mite."

"There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices."

This event was probably of recent occurrence, and took place, not in the neighbourhood of our Lord's preaching, but at Jerusalem. Bad news run fast; and there are always persons who are ready to embrace the first opportunity of communicating

them, often with no very good motives, or at least without those feelings which such tidings ought to produce upon the mind. It is more than probable, from the expression here used, "certain persons," that the informers might have been of this description—natives of Jerusalem who had recently come from the capital. What were the circumstances that led to the cruel slaughter that is here mentioned we cannot ascertain. Some are of opinion that these Galileans belonged to the party of him who, in the Acts of the Apostles, is styled Judas of Galilee; but his rising and revolt took place at an earlier period. There was a revolt in Jerusalem in consequence of Pilate having applied part of the sacred monies in defraying the expenses of constructing an aqueduct into the city of Jerusalem. But the Jewish historian says nothing of the Galileans perishing on that occasion; neither does he speak of the affecting circumstance specified by our Evangelist. It is enough to know from that historian, that tumults among the Jews were not unfrequent at this time in Jerusalem, and that the inhabitants of Galilee were prone to mingle in those scenes. According to law, sacrifices could be offered nowhere but in that city. The Jews, natives of Galilee, were accustomed to go up to it, not only at the solemn feasts but at other times, that they might present their free-will offerings and votive sacrifices; and it was upon one of these occasions that the event happened that is here told to our Lord. Pilate the governor of Judea and Herod the tetrarch of Galilee were at this time at animosity between themselves; and this circumstance probably led to some affray on the part of the Galileans when they were in Jerusalem, and induced Pilate to visit it with a severer vengeance than he might otherwise have inclined. That ruler, as we learn from Josephus, was accustomed not to awe the turbulent multitude into quietness by a display of military force, but to bring his army suddenly upon the multitude, or to introduce his soldiers in a disguised dress among the ranks, and then to fall upon them suddenly and unexpectedly. Having given orders for an attack upon the Galileans when they were in the very act of sacrificing, their blood was in that way mingled with their sacrifices at the altar. The temple was a sacred place, a place of sanctuary, whither persons were accustomed to repair that were exposed to any danger; and accordingly we learn that it was

provided, that even a manslayer, or one guilty of murder, should not be put to death at the altar, but removed from it. Philo, the Jewish writer, reasoning and commenting on this, assigns as the reason of it, that the blood of the victim offered to God must not be mingled with the blood of a homicide, even when that was poured out as an expiation and a substitute for the guilt of the offerer.

Receiving the tidings, we find that our Lord proposed a question to the informants, and to those persons who had just listened to the report. "And Jesus answering, said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?" Different motives might have actuated them in giving such information to our Lord. We may suppose, that the informants intended to dissuade our Lord from any design of going up to Jerusalem, just as an attempt was made to induce him prematurely to quit the district of Galilee, by giving him information that Herod was threatening to kill him. Or we may suppose, that they gave him information during the time he was speaking to the people, that they might hear a severe censure on the government of that tyrannical governor. Or we may suppose, being among the leaders of the people, the Scribes and Pharisees, that they wished to find in the words of Jesus some accusation against him. If they entertained any idea of this kind they were greatly disappointed. Jesus, who knew their thoughts, proposes to them a question intended to remove a misrepresentation of the ways of providence which has been common in all ages. Do you imagine that those persons who were cut off in this sudden and singular manner were peculiarly obnoxious to the judgment of God, and that they were greater sinners than their countrymen who survived them? If you think so, I tell you you are much mistaken. "I tell you, nay." God, in his wise and holy providence, has often seen it meet, that the best of his saints and most faithful of his servants should be cut off in a manner similar to these. We must not judge of the characters of men by the great and severe afflictions which God is pleased to send them. It is dangerous for us to conclude, when a person is visited with singular calamity, that God has some great quarrel with him or his family. This was the error into which the friends of Job fell, although we know in the history prefix-

ed to his trials, that God had a different end in view—to confound sin and manifest the sincerity of his friend. The ancient saints and martyrs could say, “ All this is come upon us, yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. Our heart is not turned back; neither have our steps declined from thy way.” The Apostle says, “ I think that God hath set forth us the Apostles last; for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.” “ We are made,” says he, “ as the filth of the world, and as the offscouring of all things.” In reference to the dispensations of Providence, there is, on the one hand, a carelessness about God’s works, proceeding either upon the idea, that God hath ordered the universe and then left every thing to go on by chance, or by certain laws, in the operation of which he has no immediate agency, or upon the impossibility of our knowing any thing of the subject. Now, there are various warnings against this in the Book of God. But, on the other hand, there is an extreme into which men are apt to fall, and it is in drawing rash conclusions from the operations of that providence which is a great deep, and in this way pronouncing harsh judgments with respect to the character and state of those that fall under peculiar trials; and it is against this last that our Lord intends here to give a warning. He did not mean to say, that God, in his adorable providence, inflicts in this way *unmerited* punishment on wicked men for their offences: what our Lord means here, is to warn persons against rashness of judging, and to teach them caution, and reverence, and prudence, with respect to the course of Providence. Nor does our Lord mean to deny that these Galileans, whose blood had been mingled with the blood of their sacrifices, were sinners, or that they were great sinners; all he means is to ward off the conclusion, that they were greater sinners than those that survived. “ Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” Here we have the practical improvement of the whole subject. All are sinners; and, unless they repent of their sins, by turning truly to God, they shall perish just like those men, of whose case we have an account in the Word of God. The wicked often escape without any visi-

ble judgment in this world, but they shall not be held guiltless; they shall not escape ultimately with impunity, they shall meet with an eternal retribution. It is better to be judged of our Lord here, even by a severe stroke, than to be condemned with an ungodly world. Our Lord uttered a somewhat similar caution in a former part of his discourse: I tell you, “ Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear him, who, after he hath killed the body, can cast both soul and body into hell: yea, I say unto you, Fear him.” “ Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

Another instance is adduced, in order to confirm this important practical truth which he had laid down. “ Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” Siloam or Shiloah is the name of a fountain at the foot of mount Sion, the waters of which form two pools, the one called the upper, and the other the lower. Its waters did not flow continuously like those of other fountains, but only on certain days and at certain hours; and they were of a medicinal quality, so that persons labouring under disorders were accustomed to frequent them. It appears that a tower or turret had been built upon or near to this fountain, probably for the double purpose of defending it, and of receiving the invalids who came to the place for the use of the waters, in the way of drinking or of washing. But this tower had been overthrown, probably by the shock of an earthquake, and eighteen persons were buried in its ruins. This was an event of late occurrence, and which our Lord introduces for the purpose which he mentioned on the other occasion; and he draws the same practical inferences we attended to in the other case. The Galileans lost not their lives in consequence of *an accident*; but here were eighteen persons who lost their lives in consequence of the fall of a tower, which we have every reason to think did not happen by the agency of any man whatever. Now, there may be some who may be disposed to draw from this an unfavourable conclusion with respect to the character of the victims. The massacre of the Galileans would be ascribed to the rage and ungoverned passion of Pilate; but when so

many people fell in consequence of the overthrow of a tower by an earthquake, it might be imagined that this was to be traced immediately to the hand of God, and consequently to be considered as a mark of his special displeasure. Hence it is that our Lord adds this example to the one just narrated. We are to remember that the rage of a tyrant is as much under the control of the Almighty as the rage of the elements. The tyrant's heart is in the Lord's hand, and he can turn it as he will; and accordingly the effects of the ravages of the Sabaeans and of the whirlwind are spoken of by holy Job, as if they had come from the same hand which had directed both. No doubt they did, although in a very different way; and the commentary of Job upon both was this: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

With respect to the persons who had suffered in the former case, they were Galileans; in the present instance, Jews, or native inhabitants of Jerusalem. Now, the Galileans, though they were not hated to the same degree with the Samaritans, were yet despised and kept at a distance; while the inhabitants of Judea Proper looked upon them as barbarians, and even as, to a certain degree, profane like those Gentiles or heathen, about whose territories they were situated. Can Christ come out of Galilee? said the chief priests. "Search, and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." The Jews being disposed to glory in the distinction between them and their brethren of Galilee, it looked like some mark of God's peculiar care over them, that they were Galileans only, who had been slaughtered by Pilate, or at least, whose blood had been mingled with that of their sacrifices. Now, in order to check every thing of this kind, our Lord puts them in mind of a similar event that had happened not a long time ago, and with the circumstances of which they were well acquainted, namely, the eighteen persons upon whom the tower of Siloam, by the very gate of Jerusalem, had fallen. We see here the impartiality of the Divine dispensations. We are not, however, from such facts, or from the manner in which our Lord talks of them, to think that they do

not give lessons to survivors. Sudden death, strange calamities that bring men out of this world by a storm at sea—by a hurricane on land—by an earthquake, a thunderbolt, or a pestilential visitation; with regard to each of these, are we not permitted to say that the hand of heaven is in it, and that the voice of God is to be heard from it? To each of us it says, "Hear thou this, and the man of wisdom will understand it." God, in this respect, has not left himself without a witness in any nation. He has given marks of his agency and effects of his sovereignty; but it is dangerous for men to pique themselves on their character, professions and privileges, at a time when they see men less careful about religious ordinances falling under calamity. This is one way in which false religion is apt to discover itself.

The instruction which our Lord draws from these instances, is held forth still farther in the parable of the fig-tree. But we do not enter on its consideration at present. In general, it holds forth the privileges of the Jewish people, who are often compared to the vineyard of the Almighty, the care he had taken about them, their unfruitfulness under all the benefits and mercies they enjoyed, the forbearance of the Almighty with them, and the certain and aggravated punishment that was awaiting them. And what is applied more particularly to the Jewish people and Church is to be considered as applicable to the members of the Church in every age individually, and as associated together. Its language is, "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance. For now the axe is laid to the root of the tree: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." Those that have enjoyed privileges—old people, that have been trained up from their youth in the knowledge of God, ought to be looking well to themselves, and see that they are not barren and unfruitful. They that have been bringing forth some fruit should beware of resting satisfied with it, because it may not be meet for repentance; and, at any rate, it is far short of that which God's goodness requireth at their hand. But I insist not farther at present.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 4TH JANUARY, 1834.

o. 93. | SERMON by the Rev. THOMAS M'CRIE, D.D., Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. PETER M'GUFFIE, South Ronaldshay. |

THE PARABLE OF THE FIG-TREE;
A SERMON PREACHED IN THE ORIGINAL SECEEDERS' CHURCH, RICHMOND STREET,
EDINBURGH,

By the Rev. THOMAS M'CRIE, D.D.,*

Author of the Life of Knox, Life of Andrew Melville, &c. &c.

“He spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.”—LUKE xiii. 6—9.

THIS parable throws much light upon the forbearance of God, in not cutting down sinners in their transgression, especially in the abuse that they make of divine ordinances. There is not much in the literal structure of the parable itself that requires explanation. Like the other parabolical descriptions of our Lord it is constructed of those objects of nature, or of common life, with which his audience were familiar. Some interpreters have supposed, that the structure of the parable contradicts one of the laws of the Mosaic code, which we find in the xxii. chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, at the 9th verse. “Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds; lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled.” From which they conclude, that it was not lawful for the Jews to plant a fig-tree in a vineyard. It may serve for removing this difficulty, so far as it is one, that the word rendered *vineyard*, signifies properly, a field; and according to the same law, we find in the xix. chapter of the book of Leviticus, at the 19th verse, “Thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed.” In the passage in Deuteronomy, the law does not speak about trees, but of seeds which are sown. Other interpreters consider that the parable was spoken by our Lord exclu-

sively in relation to the men of that generation who had enjoyed his ministry, and that of his forerunner, the Baptist; and that the three years here mentioned, apply to the three years of our Lord's personal ministry. We do not deny that the parable has a more immediate reference to the time in which our Lord lived, and to the Jews; but we do not consider it as exclusively applicable to that period of time, or that generation. And with respect to the three years, during which the master of the vineyard is represented as having come successively seeking fruit, and seeking it in vain, if we are to interpret them literally as referring to the years of our Lord's personal ministry, then we must recollect, that the other year, the additional year of reprieve, must be interpreted literally also. But we know, the fact was, that many years elapsed before the stroke of the axe fell on the unfruitful tree at the destruction of Jerusalem. In parables circumstances are generally introduced for the purpose of completing or adorning the allegory. It is not necessary, nor is it proper, for us to urge these circumstances too far in the application. We are to attend to the immediate, the great scope and design for which the parable was narrated. Now, this in general is to point out to us the great forbearance of God with

* For the Lecture which preceded this Sermon, see No. 92, p. 141.

those who enjoyed privileges, together with the end and issue of that forbearance, according to the improvement that may be made in the interval of the means of grace. I therefore proceed to make some improvement of the parable, in the way of applying it.

I observe, then, in the first place, that those whose lot it is to live within the pale of the visible Church, are a highly favoured people. Compared with the rest of mankind, they are like an enclosed field or garden, in the cultivating or adorning of which the proprietor lays out great pains and expense. You find this in very striking words stated in the fifth chapter of the Prophecies of Isaiah: "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine-press therein." It is also stated in a subsequent part of the same Prophecy, chapter xxvii, verses 2, 3: "In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it." Such was the distinguishing privilege of the ancient Israelites. To them pertained, as the apostle Paul tells us, "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." If any person should ask, What advantage ensued, or what profit was there in submitting to circumcision? The Spirit of God replies, "Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God." When all the rest of the world was enveloped in midnight darkness and blindness, and in gross idolatry, the Jewish people were favoured with the light of Divine revelation, pointing out to them the true God and the acceptable way of worshipping him. Now, my brethren, we who live in christian lands have had the privileges of the Jewish people transferred to us. According to that ancient prophecy, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon." Nay, the privileges of the ancient Jewish people have been transferred to us with additional advantages. "God hath provided some better thing for us." The light which has shone upon gospel lands by

means of the glorious Gospel, although not a surer, is a clearer word than that which was held forth by the prophets, who prophesied beforehand of the grace that should come unto us. The light which shines upon our land has not only dispelled the gross darkness of pagan idolatry, but has in like manner removed the shadows of Jewish types and figures, and life and immortality have been brought to light by the gospel. Every Christian Church is to be considered as a tree in that garden which the hand of God himself hath planted, and over which he watches, and for the improvement of which he has instituted means, and into which he is continually sending labourers. In times past God spake to the fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he hath spoken to us by his own Son; and he has employed men of like passions with ourselves in a ministry of reconciliation, who are, in the name of God, to beseech men to be reconciled to him, and to labour for the advancement of their sanctification, and their preparation for glory. "We are labourers together with God," says the Apostle, "ye are God's husbandry." "Paul planteth, Apollos watereth," and in this way do we enjoy means of the very highest kind for our spiritual culture and improvement. Happy they that enjoy these privileges provided they are thus taught the things that belong to their everlasting peace. "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." We, as workers together with him, beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

But, I observe in the second place, that God requires, and has a right to expect, that those who are so highly favoured should bring forth fruits of a corresponding kind. It is the peculiarity of the gospel that privilege precedes duty, but it is always taken for granted that duty shall follow. The wrath of God having been revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, God has a right to expect that all men should repent. Having sent his Son into the world, and having revealed the way of life and salvation, and having assured us that there is not a name under heaven by which men can be saved but the name of Jesus, he has a right to expect that men shall obey and thus come to communion with him. And surely he has a right to expect that the professors of the gospel shall bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

He has a right to expect that they will glorify him in their bodies and spirits which he hath redeemed with an inestimable price, and that they will submit themselves to the sway of that sceptre which he hath put into the hands of his own Son, whom he has raised from the dead, and by whom he hath declared he will judge the world. Do you ask what are these fruits which we are to bring forth under the means of grace which we enjoy? In general, we find them described in the Bible as the fruits of righteousness and the fruits of the Spirit. The Apostle requires them, to whom he had preached the Gospel, to increase in the knowledge of God, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are to the praise of God by Jesus Christ. "And," says he, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." And again the apostle Peter gives us an account of that fruit which God expects of those who enjoy the gospel: "Give all diligence," says he, "to add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." He expects also, that persons will abound in these fruits in proportion to the means of grace which they have enjoyed, and to the period of time in which they have enjoyed them. Both God and man, and particularly those employed under God in administering to the spiritual profit of man, have a right to expect this at the hands of those who are so highly favoured. The apostle Paul tells us that he had a great desire to visit the Christians at Rome, that he might have some fruit among them even as he had had among the Gentiles. "Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock and eateth not of the milk of the flock?" And we must not understand him as speaking there only of reaping carnal things from those persons to whom he had sown spiritual things, for he himself negatives this opposition: "not that I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." And, after having spoken of the necessity under which he was laid to preach the gospel whatever he might receive in the discharge of his

duty, "This," says he, "I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you."

But I observe, in the third place, that there is often great ground for lamentation and complaint, that those who are favoured by God, in point of privilege, fail in rendering him homage. How many are there who despise the goodness, and long-suffering, and forbearance of God! How many are there who know not this the day of their merciful visitation! Numbers remain altogether cold and impenitent under the means of grace, others are formal and careless—few are found bringing forth the fruits of righteousness; men will neither be awed by the judgments of God, nor will they be allure'd by his mercy. John came neither eating flesh nor drinking wine, and they said of him he hath a devil. "The Son of man came both eating and drinking, and they said, behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Few are the children of wisdom. Isaiah said, "I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought and in vain." "Behold, these three years," says the parable, "have I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none." He did not expect that return prematurely; he waited till the proper season—he allowed the fullest time for maturity; but, after all, he was disappointed, and he had a right to complain, and his complaint is couched in such terms as may be understood by the most brutish of mankind, and the burden must be left to the sinners themselves. And accordingly after proposing it in a parabolical manner, we find him saying in the passage from which I have already quoted a part: "O, inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" "If the mighty works which have been done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon," said the Lord, "they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

But again I observe, that God is justly and sorely provoked by such conduct: "Cut it down," says he, "why cumbereth it the ground?" What is the use of its remaining longer, but to fill up room in that garden on which I have bestowed so much pains, to intercept the light of the sun from the other trees that are bearing fruit, to draw away the sap from them? God is justly and sorely provoked, because such

conduct is characterized with deep ingratitude. After all the pains he had bestowed, in the way of providing them with the means of grace and salvation, giving them here a little and there a little of instruction, precept upon precept, and line upon line, and distinguishing them from others round about them; that they should, after all, act in a manner quite contrary to what he had a right to expect, must it not be provoking? "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." There is great contempt of God—there is a mockery of his hand, of his work, of his Son, of his sacraments, of his Sabbaths, of his churches, and his assemblies. Men thus show the deepest and most brutish insensibility to the welfare and salvation of their own immortal souls, after all that God has done in the way of providing for their salvation, by sending his only begotten Son into the world that he might become the propitiation for their sins; they count the blood of the covenant, wherewith the Lord was sanctified, an unholy thing—they tread the Son of God under their feet, and they do despite to the Spirit of all grace. This conduct is a depriving of God of that honour and that reverence to which he is entitled from his works, particularly in the favoured spot of his dominions, his Church. "Herein," says our Lord, "is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." Now, in proportion as he is deprived of his glory they are unfruitful; but they are also guilty of dishonouring God. There is no man who likes to see a spot, on which he has been at great pains, and laid out great expense, which he has enclosed and cultivated for many years, remaining altogether barren and unfruitful—it is bringing discredit upon him. And the same thing with respect to God, when those who enjoy high privileges are found acting in a manner unsuitable to them.

Farther, I would observe, that God is pleased to spare unprofitable members of the Church and to extend their day of grace notwithstanding all their provocations. He is represented in this parable as listening to the entreaty of the dresser of the vineyard: "Lord, let it alone this year also." The silence which is observed in the parable speaks more loudly, than if we had been told in express words, that the master of the vineyard complied with the request. We are told in the history of ancient Israel, that on one occasion God threatened that he

would destroy them, had not his chosen Moses stood in the breach and turned away his anger. Moses threw himself on the ground and entreated earnestly that God would not overthrow his people, and that they should be brought out of the land of Egypt; he used a variety of arguments, enforcing the petition which he ventured upon that occasion to present, and at the end of his prayer the Lord said, "I have pardoned according to thy word." In like manner our Lord Jesus Christ, the great dresser of the vineyard, is to be considered as praying in behalf of those that had for a long time enjoyed the means of grace, and as prevailing with his Father. What was the prayer he uttered on the cross, but just of the same import with that in the parable before us—a prayer that God would not visit with punishment those who had been instrumental in the shedding of his blood? "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." They do it ignorantly; for had they known they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. It will not be considered that the intercession, that is used with God, argues any kind of aversion on his part to do that which he is requested to do. We may apply here what we find our Lord saying on another occasion: "I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you." So here, I pray unto the Father that he will spare you a little longer in the enjoyment of the means of grace, for the Father is himself disposed to do this. The Spirit stirs up to make intercession, and the Spirit always intercedes according to the will of God. Now, God is gracious in sparing sinners that are unprofitable under the means of grace, for the glory of his own name. He acts in this manner especially for the glory of his forbearance, to show how long-suffering he is in bearing with the transgressors of his law. "My spirit," said the Lord, "shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh, yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years." And during all that period we are told, that "the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing." Then, again, how long did he bear with the ungrateful conduct of his people, whom he delivered from Egyptian bondage! "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: unto whom I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest." He acts in this manner in order that space

to repent may be given to men, and that his own elect may be gathered in. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness;" says the apostle Peter, "but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentence," "and account," says he, "that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation."

I observe again, that this interval of grace is to be diligently improved. It is an important interval when God stays as it were his hand, and when he lays the axe down upon the grass and waits to see what is to be the effect of forbearance. It ought to stimulate to diligence, both the persons themselves and those that have to do with them. The word that is sounded in the ear of such is: "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." And how diligent ought others to be, and particularly ministers of the gospel, in the way of endeavouring to excite people to attend to the things that belong to their peace; arousing them by the terrors of the law on the one hand, and alluring them to the Lord Jesus Christ, by his tender mercies, and gentleness, and long-suffering, on the other.

We observe in one word, that this forbearance will come to a close. It is remarkable that the dresser of the vineyard speaks only of one year: "Lord, let it alone this year also." It would have been wrong even in one that took such a deep interest in the matter to have asked more. God had already testified his mercy during three years and found no fruit corresponding to the pains he had taken. A definite period is here put for an indefinite period. No person knows how long the day of his grace may be; but then, he does not know how short it may be, and therefore, this ought to shut us up into a present improvement of the opportunity we enjoy. Provided the persons are in this way led to seek the things that are connected with their eternal welfare, then it shall be well with them; God will rejoice over the penitent however late his return may be. Ministers of the gospel will rejoice over him although he may have continued long to reject their entreaties; and the person himself shall have eternal ground for rejoicing, that ever he was mercifully inclined to answer to the call of God. But then, if the person shut his ear, if he turn away from reproof, if he

refuse to repent and improve that remedy which God in his infinite mercy hath provided and hath brought near to him, then, he shall at last be cut down, and the judgment that will be executed upon him, will be aggravated just in proportion to the goodness, mercy, and forbearance he has experienced, "If it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."

"Now, the axe is laid to the root of the tree: every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire." O, my brethren, let each of us be excited by this warning—delivered to us in parabolical language indeed, but in language which is plain, so plain that he that runs may read it. Let us be warned to flee from the wrath to come—to make our calling and election sure. Let us not continue careless, formal, impenitent, and unprofitable members of the Church of God. O, let us not be inclined to abuse our Sabbaths, to profane our sacraments, to add one sin to another, until we bring upon ourselves such a doom as will be intolerable, and will sink us even into the lowest hell. Let me beseech you by the mercies of God, and by the meekness and mercifulness of our Lord, to be reconciled to God, to improve the great atonement he has made by his blood. Believe the love of God to your souls; believe the sincerity of the calls and invitations of the gospel; believe that the Lord is now ready to receive you with open arms—that the sceptre of his divine grace is stretched out to you by the hand of his Son in the glorious Gospel. O, beware of slothfulness! You have an important duty to discharge as persons that have been called out of darkness into light, and translated from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son. It is incumbent on you to act a part that is honourable to God and honourable to your profession. Ye are children of the light; see that ye walk as such. Remember that not only the eyes of men, but of angels, and of God himself, are upon you. Ye are compassed about as with a great cloud of witnesses: O, then, run with patience the race that is set before you; gird up your loins; see that ye pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: forasmuch as ye know that ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE DANGER OF FALSE CONFIDENCES;

A SERMON PREACHED

By the Rev. PETER M'GUFFIE,

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"The Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them."—JER. ii. 37.

EVERY page of the book of the prophet Jeremiah breathes the purest patriotism, and the most fervent piety. In his tender years he was called to the work of the Lord, and he shrank not from his business, even although the concentrated hate of Judah was directed against him; but, in the strength of Him whom he served so faithfully, he stood forth the fearless reprobate of their backslidings, and the firm denouncer of God's judgments upon them; delivering to them at the same time instructions, by observing which their nation might be preserved, and affectionately entreating them to return to him, who in time past had wrought for them such marvellous deliverances. In all this he was discharging the duties of his commission and acting the part of a lover of his country. Enlightened by that Spirit before whom the things of futurity are open as the present, the prophet saw, with sadness of heart, his countrymen involving themselves in ruin, by despising or forgetting that source, whence had issued to them formerly the richest and most necessary blessings, and by flying, in their most dangerous emergencies, to an arm of flesh. Unless they returned to him in humility and contrition for their rebelliousness, God was about to let loose the Chaldeans upon them, as the instruments of his righteous vengeance. This the prophet knew, by the revelation of that Spirit by whom he spoke, and of this, in the deepest earnestness, he solemnly warns them, declaring, at the same time, that the authority by which he spoke, and the admonitions which he addressed to them, were none other than those of Jehovah himself. But oh! what dreadful infatuation was upon that backsliding people—how wofully had the remembrance of former judgments been blotted out—how ungratefully had past mercies been forgotten! To such a length had they gone in their ungodliness and self-confidence, that the God of their fathers was not in all their thoughts. Every measure resorted to, was as independent of him, as if he had been to them "a wilderness and a land of darkness," and as if the Divine Wisdom was no more "wonderful in counsel," and the arm of omnipotence no longer "excellent in working." "Be astonished, O heavens, and be ye hor-

ribly afraid; be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water."

God, however, is not to be neglected, nor his mercies and entreaties to be slighted with impunity. What though, in their emergencies, their collective wisdom was set to work to devise means of protection from the ravages of hostile armies—what though they "trimmed their way," and "gadded about to seek the love of the wicked"—what though the hosts of Egypt were ready to come forth to their aid—what was all this to oppose to the purposes of Him, whose arm cannot be stayed, and the thunder of whose power none can understand! Proud though they might be in the wisdom of their councils—secure though they might feel in their unrighteous foreign alliances, they were just leading themselves into that perplexing maze into which a proud self-dependence ever conducts; and while they might fancy that there was every thing in their circumstances to turn foreign aggression from their doors, or to crush it so soon as it approached—while their pictures of peace and growing prosperity lay bright and pleasingly before their eyes, they were working for themselves the fulfilment of the prophet's prediction: "Yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thine hands upon thine head: for the Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them."

In the state and conduct of Judah, my friends, we have a picture of the state and conduct of the world, in religious matters, at the present day; and as that nation, by their distrust of God, and want of reliance on his power and goodness, wrought for themselves the degradation and the miseries of a long captivity, so those who are seeking for themselves present and eternal peace by any other means than those which God has appointed, and are lulling their souls into security by false confidences, are "heaping up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

It is to such a view of the words before us that we shall now direct your attention;

and we shall notice a few of the most prominent of those confidences held by many, but rejected by the Lord. We observe,

1st. *That the general mercy of God is the ground of confidence with many, but that this is a confidence which the Lord hath rejected.*

We do not say that those who take this ground trouble themselves much with thoughts of God: but all men, even the most careless and light-hearted, have what may be called their religious—their serious moments. Conscience will occasionally bid the soul spend a thought upon its state, and take a look at the footing on which it stands with regard to God and eternity; and the bidding of conscience may, in a certain way, be obeyed in order that they may rid themselves of its chidings and importunities. But to gain this end they practice on themselves a gross deception; they purchase a little present tranquillity at the expense of eternal uneasiness. Such persons may, and perhaps always do acknowledge that they are sinners; but the conviction of this not being very deep, and entertaining no very full idea of the demerit of sin, they have a remedy at hand which brings back the soul to its security, when conscience may have shaken it for a moment. Of a feature in the divine nature, they have made to themselves a God, and exalted it to the throne of heaven. Then all goes on well with them, for in *their* God mercy is the conspicuous, nay, the only attribute. The moral law may be regarded by them as the law given by their God for the regulation of their conduct, and they admit that in some points they have transgressed it; but what of this? He who enacted that law is regarded as full of a mercy that makes him indulgent to human infirmities—a mercy which, upon the shedding of a few penitential tears, induces him to relinquish the threatened penalty—a mercy which regards future obedience as an atonement for past transgressions, and a few deeds of benevolence as covering a multitude of sins. Thus, then, they are secure. If they sin, they can propitiate his favour. They confide in his absolute mercy now, and on it they have embarked their all for eternity. Brethren, such a confidence the Lord hath most assuredly rejected, for it has at the root of it a presumptuous trifling with the character of Almighty God. Instead of giving credit to the delineation which he has given of himself in his word, and overlooking the clear demonstrations of other attributes in the doings of his providence, they cling to the **idol** of their imaginations—a God all

mercy. Full of this fond conceit, they are loud in declaiming on the amiableness of the divine nature. God, say they, cannot see his creatures miserable; it would be revolting to his very nature to consign any of them to immediate perdition. It is on this account, that we are charged by these dreamers with cherishing gloomy and malevolent feelings, and with giving blasphemous representations of the character of God, if we speak of him as he is. My brethren, the divine Being is merciful; God forbid that we should say or think otherwise! His mercy is the very spring of our redemption; but were we to deny this, we should not err more egregiously, than in denying him the possession of holiness and justice. These as really belong to him as mercy; and where are the eyes of these deceivers of themselves, when in the allotments of providence, and more especially in God's revelation of himself, they do not see justice and holiness as conspicuous as mercy?

It is a question which has furnished ground for not a little speculation, Whether happiness or misery has the preponderance in the world? and so nearly have they been supposed to be balanced, that it was difficult to come to a decision. But though it should be decided in favour of the latter, it would be no disparagement to the character or the government of God; for *sin* is the cause of misery: and the very fact of the existence of misery in the world shows incontrovertibly, that there is a righteous Ruler seated on the throne of the universe, who abhors corruption, and looks not with indifference on violations of his law. God's providential procedure contradicts such a representation of his character as that which we are now considering; for if he be all mercy, why do we see so many scenes of suffering around us? Why is the fond mother found watching for many a cheerless night by the couch of her infant, till by much agony it is taken away from the world? Why is it that so many of our race, while they are coming forth like flowers fresh in the dew of their youth, expanding themselves to receive all of sunshine which this world can give, why is it that so oft the frost and the mildew come to nip them in their bloom, and lay their beauties in the dust? Why is it, in short, that so many are cut off at all the intermediate stages, between the earliest infancy and the maturest old age, why are we not all gathered to the grave, “as a shock of corn cometh in his season,” and that too without pain or suffering of any kind? Let

those who fancy to themselves a God all mercy, solve the difficulties, and answer satisfactorily the questions. Upon their principles, how can they be explained? When we look at the divine Nature, however, in the full light of the Word of revelation; when we consider God as jealous of his glory—as hating sin with the most perfect hatred—as just as well as merciful, and therefore determined to visit the transgressor of his law with the merited punishment, unless he betake himself to the appointed refuge, we are at no loss for a sufficient reason for the evils that are to be found in the world! Now, if this be indeed the character of God, and it is demonstrated to be so by his Word and by his government, where is the security of those who confide in general mercy? If by sin we forfeit the divine favour, and by sin such a forfeiture we must make—if He with whom we have to do be holy, can mercy pardon us without doing violence to justice, unless justice obtain a full satisfaction? Such a thing is utterly incompatible with the necessary harmony of the divine attributes; and, therefore, those who take general mercy as their confidence, shall one day feel themselves miserably disappointed. "The Lord hath rejected their confidence, and they shall not prosper in it."

The Scriptures are full of declarations which show the utter fallacy of the trust of which we speak. We may assure ourselves, that those who hold to it have ideas of sin very different from those given us in "that sure Word of Prophecy unto which we do well that we take heed." Let us ponder the fact, that if man, as the Scriptures tell us, was formed in the image of God, by every act of transgression we must be effacing that image, and spoiling God's most glorious workmanship; and if God can look upon such a thing with indifference, and allow it to pass with impunity, he must be reckoned as altogether heedless of the grossest interference with his wise purposes which we can possibly suppose. Now, is such a thing at all countenanced in the Scriptures? No. "God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Evil cannot dwell with him, nor fools stand in his sight." And so jealous is he of his glory, that in his dealing with the first of our race, he annexed the penalty of death to transgression. Adam transgressed, and he died, spiritually and temporally. And where in this, is the evidence of a God all mercy? Why did not paradise smile on our first parents as

Why did the sword of the

him keep them out, from their first and most beauteous habitation? It was because God is a God of justice, and his veracity stood pledged for the fulfilment of his righteous threatening. And he stands as pledged still with regard to all but those who, being in Christ Jesus, have escaped condemnation. "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup." "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." And hath he said it, and will he not do it; hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

How sandy then is the foundation of the hopes of those who trust in general mercy! There is mercy with God, but they have not taken the way to get the benefit of it. From the great fountain it comes down to us in a copious and glorious stream; the waters of it make glad the city of our God; and every one who thirsteth is invited to come to them. This mercy it was which excited the divine Mind to compassionate our ruined and pitiable circumstances; but till the justice of God obtained satisfaction nothing could be given to our rebellious race. This is amply confirmed by the fact, that the holy Jesus suffered the penalty of the law in the room of transgressors. Now, if we can be blessed and saved by the general mercy of God, how came it, that "He who knew no sin, was made sin for us?" How came it, that he had to endure an exceeding sorrowfulness of soul, even unto death; and to drink the cup of trembling—the cup of the Father's wrath, to the very dregs? If such a mercy could have saved us, then all the purposes of heaven relative to human redemption were useless; the incarnation of the Son of God a needless display of divine Power; and the sufferings endured, and the blood shed by the blessed Jesus, were vain and superfluous. Such evidently are the blasphemies to which we should be led, did we vindicate such a trust as that of which we speak; but if it were a confidence which the Lord had appointed and approved, it needed not blasphemy to support it. Here a question presents itself, which it may not be unprofitable to answer. Why is it that those who betake themselves to this general mercy, do not rather trust to the covenant-mercy of God in Jesus Christ, since the latter is to be enjoyed as freely as the former? It is just from unbelief of the testimony which God hath given of his Son—an unbelief which has spread itself most

lamentably over our land, and if ye all are free from it, let your consciences tell—an unbelief which is nursed in the bosom of very many, notwithstanding all the evidences for the truth of our religion, arising from the mighty works wrought by its founder and his followers ; its miraculous propagation ; the fulfilment of prophecy, and all the other marks of truth by which it comes recommended. We doubt not that it is the purity of the religion of Jesus which offends them. There is no more agreement between it and their affections, than there is between light and darkness. It speaks loudly against what is dearest to them—their corrupt lusts and enjoyments. And how could they bear to have their pleasures so damped as it would damp them ! Shall they be restricted from using occasionally the oath which makes them such mighty men, which shows how bold of spirit they are, and how disdainful of the rules to which common, timid mortals submit themselves ! Shall they bridle their bold passions—shall they be kept back from tasting the sweets of life, because priesthood has called them unhallowed sweets ! Such things must not be ; and, therefore, that religion which would keep them back from that in which they have been accustomed to delight, must be disbelieved. It is disbelieved, then, not because there is any lack of evidence to commend it to their understandings, but because there is too much purity to render it palatable to their corrupt will and affections. Those who cherish such a principle, may not be pleased to have it called unbelief ; but by what name shall we call it ? It cannot be that such a principle can coexist in the soul with a principle of faith in the testimony of God, for that testimony, truly received, purifieth the heart. Wherever there is cherished impurity, then there is unbelief, open or concealed. Now, the doom to which unbelief leads is clearly revealed in these words of the Lord Jesus : “ If ye believe not that I am he ye shall die in your sins.” Such a declaration is the very death-knell to the hopes of those who trust in an unpropitiated God ; and if there be any such in this assembly, we would have them to ponder these words of the Saviour, and to examine minutely the grounds of their confidence. Though it may not be that you have formally and deliberately taken the general mercy of God as the foundation of your hope, ask yourselves, if the thought of it did not lurk about your minds and become the solace, the appeaser of your consciences when they

were speaking to you of your sins ? And imagine not that it is enough of homage to religion that you think and speak well of it, and of those who walk conformably to its rules. Balaam, who was ready for gain and honour to curse God’s chosen people, spake most touchingly of the loveliness of the tents and the tabernacles of Jacob, when he viewed them from the top of Peor. He could wish to die the death of the righteous, and to have his future state like theirs ; but, in the account we have of him, we see not the trace of a desire to live the life of the righteous. The gold of Balak had irresistible charms for him. See, ye who repose an unwarranted confidence in the general mercy of the Deity, see that the lust of the flesh and of the eye, and the pride of life, be not keeping you away from what is at once your interest and your duty. And let me again warn you against thinking that you are good enough disciples of Jesus, because you speak well of his religion. Professed infidels have spoken of it as highly as you can possibly do ; and in speaking so we doubt not but they have given utterance to their thoughts. But what of this, if, after their example, you avail not yourselves of the offers of the gospel, because there would be on you an obligation to the precepts of the gospel, and these are at variance with enjoyments which you would not willingly deny yourselves. You regard religion with feelings similar to those which you would entertain, if, from an eminence in the country you inhabit, you could descry a land of beauty and fertility, here stretching its beauteous lawns and pouring its majestic floods—there raising to the sky the glories of its mountain scenery, and everywhere waving in the breeze the luxuriance of its productions, while you knew that were you to visit it, you would inhale disease in its atmosphere, and quaff death at its streams. If such be the feelings of any of you with regard to the religion of Jesus ; if its purity has driven you to a secret unbelief, and when that unbelief could present nothing that was soothing to your souls when the thought of eternity was forced upon them, and you fled to some such confidence as the mere mercy of God ; if such be the case, depart from such a trust without delay. Apply for mercy through Jesus Christ, the only channel through which it can flow to us in consistency with the divine justice. If any continue in his obstinacy ; if any slight that plan of saving sinners which sheds such a lustre on all the attributes of the divine

nature, he shall find that "our God is a consuming fire : he shall go forth from him, for the Lord has rejected his confidence, and he shall not prosper in it."

2d. *Many trust to their own righteousness for acceptance with God, but this also is a confidence which the Lord hath rejected.*

Do and live, is the motto of the religion of such persons. They purpose to get to life, and their way to it is by keeping the commandments. God, say they, has annexed the promise of future felicity to obedience, and we obey that that felicity may be ours for a reward. Now, this would do very well, did we retain our original standing with God ; but whether man be now that holy being he was when God pronounced him to be very good, let the state of the world, let your own hearts witness. Keeping this in view, let us examine the conditions binding upon those who would get to life by their personal righteousness. There is a law to be obeyed, and obeyed *perfectly*, which extends not only to the external deportment, but to the very thoughts and feelings of the soul. That such is the law, is clear from that part of our Lord's discourse upon the mount, which relates to this point ; and that a perfect obedience is required, we know from the unequivocal declarations, "that he who is under the law, is a debtor to do the whole law," "and that he who offends in one point, is guilty of all." How stand the most righteous persons, then, with regard to this perfect law ? Are they conscious that no transgression of it is chargeable upon them—that to the Spirit and the letter of the commandment they have yielded the required obedience. We pretend not to know how those, who trust to their own righteousness for salvation, feel upon this point ; but we know how the most eminent saints, whose history is recorded in the Bible, have felt ; and we know what are the statements of Him who knoweth what is in man, relative to this very subject. Did not Jacob say, that he was unworthy of the least of the mercies bestowed on him ? How, then, could he merit the greatest possible good that can be conferred upon man—introduction into glory ? Did not David confess his transgression, and that his sin was ever before him ? He then could have little to look for on the score of obedience. Did not Peter say before his master, "I am a sinful man, O Lord ?" His claims, then, on the ground of personal merit, could not be very powerful. Did not Paul say, that the law was spiritual, but he was carnal—

sold under sin ? Eternity, then, must have been a bleak and dreary prospect to him, if his own obedience had been the ground of his confidence. And what says the Spirit of God upon the subject ? "God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back ; they are altogether become filthy ; there is none that doeth good, no not one." Let me ask, then, is there any thing in the experience of the people of God, which shows that they have no occasion to make similar confessions still ? Has any change passed upon the world, which tells, that the statement we have now quoted from the 53d psalm, was only true of the condition of the human race at the time when that psalm was written ? We suspect not. But if so, where is the proof ? We are sure that if any one has thought so, he is deluding himself with the dreams of pride ; for all of us have ample evidence to the contrary, both within ourselves, and every day before our eyes. The conscience of every man who knows aught of the law of God, and is at all accustomed to compare his conduct and his feelings with its requirements, will testify, that it is as true now, as on the day when it was written—that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." If it be true, then, as the Apostle says, that "the Scripture hath concluded all under sin," who can come forward and claim salvation on the ground of his obedience to that law, which, as we have seen, requires a perfect conformity to it, both in the life and in the heart ?

But many, who "trust to themselves that they are righteous," will endeavour to get rid of these considerations, by saying, that though they have sinned, they have repented : that is, they have felt sorry for their sin, and that God will receive penitence as an atonement. Brethren, this is trifling with the character of God, and with that righteous government which it is his immutable purpose to maintain throughout the whole of his dominions. Even human legislators have not failed to see how subversive such a principle would be of the good of civil society, if put in practice in the world. Would it be right—would it be consistent with good government, that crime should go unpunished, if the criminal, when brought to the bar of justice, should express sorrow for his offence ? All know that it would not. And will God fail to vindicate his law, his justice, his veracity, because of a few sorrowing tears and sighs ? How would this

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mark his abhorrence of sin—how would it justify his frequent and fearful denunciations of wrath upon the sinner—how would it accord with the necessity of his Son's sacrifice? Repentance, in which sorrow for sin is but an ingredient, is a necessary Christian grace; but it is not a satisfaction to God for sin, and he pardons the sinner, not on the ground of it, but through the atonement of Jesus, that he may be just, as well as merciful, when he justifies the ungodly.

But it is said that Jesus, by his obedience and suffering, has obtained an abatement of the law—that he has softened it down, in order to fit it to human infirmity—that it is not a perfect, but a sincere, obedience that is required—and that if we fall short in any thing, the merit of Christ comes in to supply the deficiency. We have put together these “refuges of lies,” because we have not time to consider them separately; but we hope what has been already said, together with the following remarks, will be sufficient to show the utter insecurity of all of them.

We observe, then, *first*, that Christ came for no such purpose as to temper the law to our infirm circumstances; for if the law was originally right—if that wisdom which enacted it, and which cannot err, saw it to be fit and necessary, it must be immutably so. What! did Christ die, that we should not be obliged to love God and our neighbour, so much as we were originally bound to do. Did he give himself, to procure for us a liberty to sin with impunity? No one in soberness of spirit will say so. And what is his own declaration on the point? It is such as to put away this doctrine from the creed of every one who resorts to him for instruction. “Think not,” says he, “that I am come to destroy the law; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil; for verily I say unto you, that heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.” We should think that this is sufficiently clear upon the point; and with such a declaration before our eyes, we envy not the security of those who trust to a modified law.

secondly, with regard to the merit of lying only for the little that we may have fallen short, we observe, that it is altogether at variance with every dictate of Scripture, on the subject of the sinner's salvation. Was not the sacrifice of Christ a *full* satisfaction to divine justice? Did he not magnify the law, and make it honourable? And can it be necessary that to his infinite satisfaction and merit we should add our obedience, soiled and imperfect as it

must be at best, in order to obtain pardon and acceptance with God? What an unhallowed mixing of the clean and unclean—what a confounding of Christ and Belial would be here! Besides, why will men be so perverse as to seek justification by the law, whether it be abated, as it is not, or whether it stands in its original force, as it does to those who are under it, and as a rule of life to all. Why will men be so perverse, when it is said so pointedly, “that ‘by the deeds of the law no living flesh shall be justified?’” But we may be told that we mistake or misinterpret the Apostle's words. He is not speaking of the moral, but of the ceremonial law. Let the Apostle then speak for himself. The words which we have quoted, are to be found in the 3d chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and 20th verse; but in order that we may determine to which law he refers, we wish you to look at the chapter from the 10th verse downwards, while we ask the following questions from it:—Are unrighteousness and want of understanding, not seeking after God, becoming unprofitable, not doing good; having our throat as an open sepulchre, using deceit with our tongues; having the poison of asps under our lips, our mouths full of cursing and bitterness; our feet swift to shed blood, having destruction and misery in our way, and not knowing the way of peace—are these transgressions of the moral or of the ceremonial law? We appeal to any man who is capable of judging, if they are not clearly sins against the former. It is by that law, then, that the Apostle says, in the 19th verse, that every mouth is to be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God; and this is his conclusion, “therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.”

We apprehend that, to every candid person, the foregoing considerations are sufficient to show how unsafe a foundation, on which to build for eternity, are our own righteousness, and those things connected with it which we have noticed. Let us beware, then, of making flesh our arm. We know that it is the pride of the heart, and jealousy of the supposed dignity of human nature, which urge many to such a refuge. They are led away from happiness by the dreams of a corrupted fancy; for their bright and glowing pictures of human dignity are not true to nature. Like the productions of an unskilful artist, who is profuse of his colouring, they may dazzle the eyes of the ignorant; but they must offend any one who has made human nature his study. Be not

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ye, my friends, carried away with such fancies. Examine your own hearts, and you will at once see how untrue they are. Consult the Scriptures, and you will be convinced that secure though these trusters to themselves may feel, yet theirs is an unhappy state ; for "the Lord hath rejected their confidence, and they shall not prosper in it."

What, then, is the confidence, by depending on which we may look forward securely to eternity ? It is the righteousness of Jesus, made ours by imputation, and received by that faith which is of the operation of God. The Scriptures, the only source of information on such subjects, are clear upon the point. It is on this account that Jesus is called, in prophecy, "the Lord our righteousness." Paul, too, wished to be found "not having on his own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ ;" and he elsewhere says, that "by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

We have noticed the only scriptural ground of confidence, both because it is necessary that it should be proclaimed, and also for the purpose of introducing our third and last remark, which we shall do little more than mention.

3d. *That too many content themselves with a bare speculative knowledge of the true way of salvation, and that this is a confidence which the Lord hath rejected.*

A man, though he belong not to the family of God, may be perfectly capable of knowing all in the Scripture that is level to the human understanding ; and there may be, and there frequently is, displayed the ability to speculate correctly on the method

of salvation, while the heart is not right with God. There is a form of godliness without the power. In order to a real saving knowledge of the subject of redemption, we must have a deep impression of the truths which the subject involves : the deep depravity of our nature—our alienation from God—the hatefulness and repugnancy of sin to the divine nature—our inability to rescue ourselves from perdition—the love, the wisdom, the condescension, all infinitely displayed in the plan and the execution of our redemption—and the readiness and ability of Christ to save. It is from the want of a full conviction of these things that the knowledge of the way of salvation is in many cases so unfruitful—that so many orthodox professors are loose in their practice. Could such a knowledge avail us with such a practice, with some truth might it be said that the doctrine of grace leads to licentiousness ; but that doctrine, when properly received, has a very different effect. Thus reasons the Apostle : "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price ; therefore glorify God in your bodies and your spirits, which are God's."

In conclusion. Consider well, brethren, on what you are placing your confidence. On a matter so awfully important as the salvation of your souls, content not yourselves with ideas which are discordant with the teachings of God's Spirit. Jesus is set before you omnipotent, and willing to save. He is the hiding-place from the storm ; resort to him, and you shall find shelter ; delay not. While you are tarrying, it may overtake you, and if you are overtaken, there is no deliverance. You fall into the hands of the living God, and that is a fearful thing !

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To whom all Communications should be addressed.

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SATURDAY, 11TH

94.

LECTURE by the Rev. J. MITCHELL, D.D., S.T.P., Glasgow.

SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT BUCHANAN, Edinburgh.

Price 2d.

THE GLORY OF GOD'S GOVERNMENT IN THE NATURAL WORLD;

A LECTURE ON THE 20TH PSALM,

By the Rev. JOHN MITCHELL, D.D., S.T.P.,

Minister of Wellington Street United Secession Church.

"Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thundereth; the Lord is upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests; and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory. The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever. The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace."

This is evidently a sublime ode. It is intended to represent the majesty of God, the aids we may expect from him, and the homage we ought to render him. The last is the view with which it opens.

One writer of celebrity has conceived that it refers to the power, and progress, of the Gospel in the latter days—to the triumphs which Christ will achieve over all the enemies of the truth, and to the blessings which will flow from his glorious reign over the nations. This is an ingenious, and a pleasing view. It may also, possibly, be correct. But this psalm, as far as we can perceive, exhibits no distinct traces of such a reference; and probable conclusion, not conjectural supposition, must in all cases be the guide of our interpretation. Conceiving, therefore, that we are not warranted to adopt an assumption so unsupported, as the ground of our exposition; we shall adhere to the con-

vention, and, at the same time as far

as the psalm commences with an ardent exhortation to praise God, in a way befitting his character and our duty: "Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength." This address is susceptible of three senses, according to the various translations which may be given of the original. In the first, which our translators have adopted, "Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength," the meaning may be thus expressed, "Ye mighty ones among the people, ye men of rank and of influence, especially ye who are famed for prowess, have fought the battles of the Lord, and covered his land and his people with renown, ascribe unto him all the honour of your high achievements, the glory of all your exaltation and excellence. Arrogate nothing to yourselves. Consecrate all your talents, and all your

Give him the praise; let

rendered,

view, the sense may be, "Give

Lord, O ye chiefs of the nations, the homage which ye owe to him, as your Liege Lord, and the almighty One, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice, and to whom ye owe all your grandeur and all your authority, all your powers and all your honours of every kind." Translating it, "Ye sons of the gods," this may be the Psalmist's idea, "O ye worshippers of idols, far and near, withdraw your homage from them who, by nature, are no gods, and transfer it to Him to whom alone it is due—Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth." Which of these views is preferable, it is not easy to determine. Each is just and appropriate, and each presents a shade of meaning that is distinct and important. Perhaps we can hardly say, with propriety, that each was in the eye of David at the same time; but this we may say, that the fulness of his expression comprehends all, and that none of them can be thought to have been excluded from his general conception of what was due to his God. When we look, however, to the close of the psalm, which may be considered as fixing the sense, or at least suggesting the reference, we are inclined to adopt the view of our translators, and to consider the exhortation as addressed immediately to the chosen people. On them, the duty of praising Jehovah was peculiarly obligatory. To them, a singular revelation had been made of his being, attributes, works, and glory. They had special access to his sanctuary, and they were exclusively consecrated for rendering to him the honour that to his name was due. Now, says the Psalmist, ye children of Israel, give unto the Lord "glory and strength." These two expressions are not synonymous. They do not refer to the same class of benefits. They are equivalent to *honours and aids*. It is as if he had said, "Ascribe unto the Lord, ye mighty ones, my chiefs and my heroes, the praise of all the feats of arms ye have performed, of all the renown ye have acquired; for it was he who taught your hands to war, and your fingers to fight, who blessed your exertions with success, and crowned your arms with victory." "Therefore let the chosen people, especially the rulers, the host of the high ones, refer to him, all their strength and courage, all their triumphs and all their conquests. He opened up the way to your fathers. He drove out their enemies from before them. He put them in possession of this "goodly land," and he hath

hitherto maintained the fair lot that hath fallen to them among the hosts of the nations." "Yea, give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name." This last expression is not to be viewed as simply a repetition of the preceding. Indeed, though it had been so, it could not have been justly considered as superfluous, since, by increasing its emphasis, according to the impassioned language of poetry, it would have added to its expressiveness and its beauty. But it is more extensive, and exhorts those to whom it is addressed, not only to bless the Lord for all their own achievements and acquisitions, but for all the attributes and excellencies of their God. "Let your homage and your adorations correspond, as far as may be, to his infinite and superlative grandeur and goodness; laud and bless him, for all his excellent greatness, and for all his exuberant kindness to you, and to the children of your people, from age to age. And O! see that this be done in a becoming manner, not only in form, but in spirit; not only throughout the land in general and your daily walk, but in the accustomed place, and during the celebration of your appointed solemnities: 'worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, or, as some would render it, in the holy sanctuary.'" As this last version, however, (though we deemed it right to mention it in passing, as a variety of which the inspired text is susceptible) is not drawn so directly from the sacred fountain; so it is neither so emphatic, nor so interesting, as that which is suggested by the translation before us. Doubtless it was the wish of David, that all the heathen round about should become converts to the true religion, and repair for worship to the tabernacle of the Lord at Jerusalem—that they might there join with his chosen people in his service; but such local resort was not necessary to the exercise of acce-

of old; and the state of the mind and heart, the character and conduct of the worshipper, have ever been the chief consideration. "*The beauty of holiness!*" What a simple, yet beautiful and significant expression! There is a loveliness about true piety; there is a winning grace about moral excellence, which constitutes at once the best ornament, and the brightest glory. You find this sentiment beautifully amplified, and illustrated, in two other passages of this very book, viz., Ps. xlv. 13, 14, and xcvi. 1—10. "*The beauty of holiness*"—that is, the graces of God's own Spirit, which form the attractions

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of character, and the elements of the divine life. The beauty of the body is nothing to the light of the mind ; richness and elegance of attire nothing to the lovely affections of a heavenly heart. Depravity is deformity, vice is pollution ; but goodness is comeliness, and virtue is full of spiritual lustre. These constitute angelic beauty. These make us lovely in the eyes of God. It is in the faith of Christ, which he himself pronounces " precious ;" it is in the grace of his own Spirit ; it is in the beauty of an holy character and an humbled heart that we are called to worship our God.

Having thus urged those whom he addressed to the due and acceptable service of Jehovah his God, the Psalmist next proceeds to take that view of his power and government, which might enforce his exhortation, by at once attracting and justifying such homage. " Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name ; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. The voice of the Lord is upon the waters : the God of glory thundereth ; the Lord is upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful ; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars ; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. He maketh them also to skip like a calf ; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness ; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calf, and discovereth the forests ; and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory. The Lord sitteth upon the flood ; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever." The voice of the Lord is obviously a metaphorical expression, since a pure spirit has no organs of speech, and no utterance ; but it is beautiful and significant. The voice of man is the great evidence of his natural dignity—the vehicle of his wisdom and eloquence—the instrument of his authority and influence. It is indicative of reason, and is called his glory. By this he utters his commands, and executes his purposes. Hence the word, or voice, of God, is represented as the grand means of imparting his wise counsels, and accomplishing his high designs. By this he made, and arranged the worlds. He said, " Let there be light ! and there was light." " By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." " He spake, and it was done ;

he commanded, and it stood fast." The voice of the Lord is here then expressive of the fiat of Deity, of the working of his mighty power. It represents the divine majesty in utterance, and in actions—the Almighty announcing his will, and putting forth his power. "*The voice of the Lord is upon the waters : the God of glory thundereth.*" The first clause is not very intelligible in the present rendering ; but, the sense becomes immediately apparent, when we have made a slight change, which the original will fully warrant : "The voice of the Lord is *above* the waters : the God of glory thundereth ; the Lord is *above* many waters." The thunder is the voice of the Almighty, and it proceedeth as from the throne of God, situated upon, or above, the clouds. Obviously, there is nothing more sensibly and strikingly indicative of divinity. It rolls, and sounds through the vast expanse on high. Beneath its deep-toned peals and reverberations, all living nature shrinks and trembles ; the earth seems sad, and fearful, and silent ; men and the inferior animals cower, and do homage to the Majesty of the Universe. Nor is this wonderful ; for " who can thunder with a voice like his ?" Now, this voice is upon the waters, often upon many waters, when " the God of glory thundereth." It is from the thick cloud that the peal proceeds ; it is in the day of clouds, usually of the gathering of clouds, that the thunder waxeth louder and louder—echoing from cloud to cloud, from region to region, throughout the firmament of heaven. In the day of the storm his throne seems to be set upon the clouds ; his voice seems to issue from the depth of their dark recesses, as from the innermost chambers of his high palace. You see a beautiful and an amplified illustration of this idea in Job xxxvii. 1—7, and especially in Psalm xviii. 1—17. Thus it is said, with peculiar propriety, as expressive of the majesty of the Most High, in the verse before us, " The voice of the Lord is upon the waters : the Lord of glory thundereth : the Lord is upon many waters."

It is added, " The voice of the Lord is powerful : the voice of the Lord is full of majesty." Who can doubt that the voice of Him who spake the universe into existence is powerful ? or who that ever heard the thunder can doubt that it is full of majesty ?

But he proceeds to illustrate the affirmation, in both respects, by some other examples, which are of a highly poetical descrip-

tion ; and which, had they been found in any other book, would have been immeasurably eulogized by infidels, as among the finest effusions of original genius. "The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars ; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon." The voice of the Lord breaketh or shivereth the cedars, &c. The writer is probably alluding to the bolt of heaven, which accompanies the thunder, and which sometimes in a moment, and in a manner the most irresistible, splits and shatters the strongest trees. It is probable, too, as the lightning usually smites only one, and more are here mentioned, that another agent, which is often associated with both, is comprehended in the reference, namely, the tempest. But, to apprehend the force of the illustration, we must remember what kind of trees the cedars were. And, you know, they were plants of prodigious strength and durability, the glory of the vegetable kingdom. Crowning the summits and slopes of Lebanon, formed into forests of vast extent, they outlived the age, and seemed to defy the strength of man. But they fell at once under the stroke, and were levelled by the blast of the Almighty ; they were broken and shrivelled by his lightning, or prostrated and laid on heaps by his tempest. What a mighty agency ! What a proof of power !

Yet it seems to be surpassed by the representation which follows : "He maketh them also to skip like a calf ; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn." Sirion, otherwise called Hermon, was originally a portion of the kingdom of Bashan, and formed either a part of the chain of mount Lebanon, or a detached hill, or knoll, which rose in its vicinity. The expression rendered a young unicorn, refers to the whelps of beasts of prey, which are peculiarly playful, and full of life and spirit. Now, says the Psalmist, the Lord makes the cedars to skip like a sportive calf ; Lebanon to leap like the cub of a wild animal, which frisks and bounds, leaps and runs, with astonishing alertness and vigour. In short, he represents them as dancing and gambolling like the most wanton and freakish of the animal tribes, under the impulse of the powerful forces of nature. What, then, can these forces be ? The tempest, you know, will not affect the mountains. The thunder may rend the air, but does not move the earth. The lightning may blast the tree, but cannot rock the ground. Hills bid defiance to the utmost

violence of all the three. Some other mighty agent is here, therefore, tacitly introduced. And what can this be but the earthquake, which is sometimes accompanied by these terrible phenomena, and surpasses them in its powerful effects—which shakes the solid fabric of the globe—which causes the mountains to tremble, and makes the cedars to whirl as the plaything of a child ? In this, then, we have a still more tremendous proof, in one view at least, of the majesty and power of God. The world shakes, but his throne is immovable. The community of man trembles, but he is calm. The forces of nature toss and tear every thing on earth, the most stable and strong ; but nothing, no convulsion nor no change, affect the tranquillity of his mind, or the order of his government, or the duration of his empire and existence. He is the immutable Jehovah. He is the eternal One. And, at last, when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth and the things that are therein shall be burnt up—seated on high, amid "the crash of nature, and the wreck of worlds," with a firm voice he will control the mighty uproar, and, with a steady hand, conduct the wild war of elements and of worlds, to a consummation worthy of himself—calculated to reflect honour upon his administrations, and to subserve the final purposes of his justice and of his grace.

In connexion with the thunder the tempest and the earthquake, the Psalmist introduces another agency, which frequently accompanies all. "The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire." At first sight, this may appear a feebler illustration, a less striking proof of divine power. But, upon reflection, you will perceive, that it is still stupendous and terrible. Fire, in its highest eruptions and operations, is the most fearful, and furious, and uncontrollable of all elements. Such is subterranean fire, when it bursts forth in the volcano. Such is empyrean fire, when it brightens the firmament, and dazzles the eye, though it does not blast and consume. Who can pretend to guide the latter, to suppress the former, to have the least influence over either ? Without the call of the sons of men it comes forth ; without their command it departs. Nothing is more obviously beyond the reach or the control of mankind. Yet the voice of the Lord "divides the flames of fire." He says unto this most lawless element,

“ Go, and it goeth ; come, and it cometh.” He causeth it to shine under the whole heaven, or to retire into its secret chamber, so that all becomes dark again, even darker than before. He brandisheth on high his sword and his spear, or he replaces them in his arsenal. He gives unto the coruscations of the lightning those beautiful shapes and tints, which men of sublime genius admire ; or causes it to descend from the sky in one unvaried stream and flood of light, to amaze, arouse, illume. He bids it consume and wither, extensively, the fruits of the earth ; or, with innoxious blaze, to glare and threaten, but not to blast or destroy. “ Hear attentively,” saith Elihu, speaking of the fearful agents to which we have been adverting, and which we have been adducing as illustrations of the terrible majesty of God, “ the noise of his voice, and the sound that goeth out of his mouth. He directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightning unto the ends of the earth. After it a voice roareth : he thundereth with the voice of his excellency, and he will not stay them when his voice is heard. God thundereth marvellously with his voice, great things doth he which we cannot comprehend.”

The next image is quite in keeping with the foregoing, and seems to be taken from the fact of a correspondent and often contemporaneous commotion of nature : “ the voice shaketh the wilderness ; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.” As you learn from Numbers xiii. 26, and xxiii. 36, the wilderness of Kadesh was otherwise called Sin ; and was part of the wilderness of Paran. It formed that great desert, in which the children of Israel sojourned for so many sad years. Yet we are not to suppose, that it was entirely waste, or unoccupied ; for we read of the flocks of Kedar, and of the tents of Cushan belonging to it ; we are aware that the descendants of Ishmael, of Esau, dwelt there ; and we know that Moses fed the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, in this very region. The truth is, that any district, which, though fertile in itself, and rich in pastureage, was not given to the plough, or closely inhabited, was denominated, in the language of the Jews, a wilderness. Hence we read of the wilderness of Judah, whither David fled from Absalom, and found subsistence ; and where John baptized, while multitudes resorted to him. Now, it is here said, that “ the voice of the Lord shaketh

the wilderness ; the voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.” This effect, it is evident, cannot be ascribed physically to most of the powerful causes already mentioned—to the lightning, or to the tempest, or even to the thunder. Is it then to be referred to the earthquake ? Doubtless this would be competent to produce it ; but a tremendous agency of this sort has, as we have seen, been already alluded to ; and it is not probable, that it would be introduced again so soon, especially in a descriptive poem so brief in its tenor, and apparently so varied in its statements. How then are we to expound the verse ? We conceive, that it involves a beautiful, though indirect reference, to the glorious commotion which occurred in the wilderness of Sin, or Paran, or Kadesh, *at the giving of the Law*, when God, assembling “ all his terrors round about him,” as on a solemn day, came down on Sinai, while the mountain shook with the commotion of the earthquake, the firmament was covered with fearful prodigies, and the people trembled. To this there is, as you may remember, an allusion equally sublime and picturesque, in the 68th Psalm, verses 7. 8. “ O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness ; Selah :—The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God : even Sinai itself, was moved at the presence of God, even the God of Israel.” Never before, since the creation of the world, had there been an occasion on which God had displayed more of stupendous majesty, amid the varied and terrible tokens of his presence ; for although the voice which he immediately uttered was “ a still, small voice ;” yet it issued from the midst of fire on the mountain’s top, and was swelled by peals of thunder, and by the roar of the earthquake.

The last and crowning circumstance introduced seems to be derived from the effect of all : “ The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests ; and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory.”—“ The hinds to calve,” to be in pain, or agony, especially the pangs of travail. “ The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve,” to bring forth suddenly, to cast their young. The language refers to the influence of the terrors of the Lord, manifested in the convulsions of nature, upon even these heedless and frisking creatures. They are so fearfully affected by them, that the pains of

parturition come upon them, as in a moment, and they are prematurely delivered. Some would render the clause thus, "the voice of the Lord maketh bare the oaks, or uproots and shivers them." But this, though a strongly descriptive circumstance, is not so strikingly original, as the one adopted by our translators; while it also coincides closely with the image in the 5th verse, as well as with that which immediately followeth, "The voice of the Lord discovereth the forests, or maketh bare the forests; penetrates their thick array; tears their trunks and branches; strips and scatters their leaves; discloses their dark recesses; and lays their towering honours low. Nothing except the plain which it overshadows or the mountain which it adorns, stands the fury of the storm so successfully as the compact forest. Formed by its strong stems and brawny arms, supporting and interlacing each other, into a close phalanx, it opposes, and repels the force of ordinary blasts. But the tempest shakes, and the hurricane uproots, and prostrates it. There is, besides, an allusion, in the etymology, to the cover of the wild beast. These terrors of the Lord also rouse this creature from his lair, and hush his threatening roar, and drive him abroad, as a forlorn fugitive, to seek other haunts. Yet "in his temple every one speaks of the glory of the Lord." "Every one," literally the totality, the whole of the things mentioned; all these, in the temple of the Lord, speak of the glory of the Lord. To uninstructed men, these prodigies and commotions seem the product of chance, or the wild war of elements; but to the enlightened mind, they will appear to be the agents of the Almighty, the demonstrations of his power, and occasionally the tokens of his wrath, or the ministers of his vengeance.

Hence it is added, "the Lord sitteth upon the floods, yea the Lord sitteth King for ever." This refers to that control which God exercises, and which *he alone* can exercise, over these terrible agents, and apparently lawless commotions of nature. What man can roll the thunder, or brandish the lightning, or bridle the tempest, or heave the earthquake? All these mock his command. Indeed, he is so sensible of his utter impotency in this relation, that, with all his pride, he never affects to rule them. But "God sits King upon the floods." He makes the clouds his chariot. He rides upon the whirlwind, and guides the storm. He hath

fixed his throne upon the bosom of the foaming billows, and sways his sceptre over the tempestuous ocean. He bids the earthquake rise, and shake terribly the earth; or sink into its cavern as a babe is lulled to sleep in his cradle. He presides over all the prodigies, and convulsions of nature.

Displaying, then, his mighty power in exciting, or subduing, all those things in the physical world which are most ungovernable and dreadful and destructive; can we doubt that, in the spiritual world, he possesses equal power, and will exercise it for ends the most beneficial? "The Lord," adds the Psalmist, "will give strength unto his people, he will bless his people with peace;" *i. e.* It is this Lord, this glorious one on whom the good depend for every assistance, and every benefit; and he assuredly will give them, while they trust in him, ability to perform their duty, as well as fortitude to sustain their trials. "He will bless his people with peace," approve himself their defence, drive war far from their coasts, and cause them to "sit under their vine and their fig-tree, while no one shall have power to make them afraid." He who presides over all nature, he who rules over all agents and elements; over all commotions, and all causes, the most potent and lawless, the fiercest and the wildest; over all influences and operations to which human beings can set no bounds, and which mock the control of man—he will invigorate the soul, and spread a holy calm over it, filling it with a "peace of God which passeth all understanding;" preparing it for the land of heavenly rest; and conducting it to that world, where all is serenity, and safety, untroubled and eternal.

The following observations, which are chiefly practical, may be deduced from the statements in this ode, which we have attempted to explain.

1. All that we can do for God is to ascribe to him devoutly, the excellencies which he already possesses. "Give unto the Lord ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength: give unto the Lord the glory that is due unto his name." "Can a man be profitable unto God," says Eliphaz, "as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect? If thou be righteous" adds Elihu, "what givest thou to him? or what receiveth he at thine hands?" How differ-

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ent what he can do for us, and we for him! He gives us all—we can give him nothing; yea, it is “of his own wherewith we serve him.” Should not this consideration “hide pride from the eyes of man,” and dispose us to refer all the goodness we have, or do, to God alone?

2. There is an ornament in true goodness, which surpasses all other adorning—“worship the Lord *in the beauty of holiness*,” is the exhortation of the Psalmist. Virtue is the fairest of all lineaments. The image of God is the loveliest of all resemblances. The gracious temper of the heart, and the good works of the life, are the brightest, the most precious of all jewels; and were it not for the perversity of human taste, would be most highly admired, and most eagerly coveted. “Whose adorning,” says the apostle Peter, speaking of women possessing godliness, “let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing gold, and of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price: for after this manner in the old time, the holy women, who trusted in God, adorned themselves.”

3. The word of God is the most powerful of all agents: v. 3—10. So it is in the natural world. The fiat of Jehovah is almighty, and produces the most wonderful effects. Nor is it less potent in the spiritual world. “The word of God,” saith the inspired writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, “is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” This word quickens “the soul in sin that lies;” produces a new creation within; and causes life and light, order and beauty and fertility to spring from death and darkness, from chaos and deformity and desolation.

4. It is comfortable to reflect, that our God reigns amid all commotions and confusion, however violent and extensive they may be. “The Lord sitteth upon the floods, yea the Lord sitteth King for ever.” “The floods, O Lord, have lifted up their voice: the floods lift up their waves. The

Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters. He stillleth the noise of the waves, the noise of the waves and the tumult of the people.” Such are the representations of the Book of God. And how comfortable must the consideration of such facts be to his people, amid days of darkness and disorder; when the foundations of the earth may seem to be going out of course; and when all things may be threatening to return to ancient chaos and night!

Lastly, God can *not only calm, but bless*, every agitation, however violent and disastrous. “The Lord will give strength to his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace.” He perfects his strength in their weakness. He over-rules every evil, which can befall them, for the best end. Under the wonderful agency of his grace, contraries seem to arise from their opposites. He causes order to grow out of confusion, light to spring out of darkness, the blessing from the curse, life from death, and glory from the grave.

To conclude, my brethren, let us never forget two things. The first is, that the God of grace is also the God of nature and of providence. The best of beings presides over all; and thus causes all things, whatever character they bear, or to whatever department they belong, to work together, invariably and irresistibly, for his glory and the good of his people.—And the second is, that whatever of wonder and of glory is displayed in the natural and visible government of God, will be equalled, yea surpassed, in the economy of redemption, and in the administration of grace. For these last constitute a nobler system. They belong to an higher dispensation of divine goodness; they involve sublimer relations of government; they are subservient to grander issues of being; and we cannot, therefore, doubt that their present operations, though in a great measure unseen and unknown, are most stupendous; and that, when they shall have been consummated and unfolded, they will manifest more of beauty, excite more of admiration, and give more abundant reason to break forth into that adoring anthem, which even now resounds through the heavens: “Great and marvellous are thy works, just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints.”

THE GUILT AND DANGER OF DELAYING THE CONCERN OF
ETERNITY;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THE FORENOON OF SUNDAY, 8TH DECEMBER, 1833,

By the Rev. ROBERT BUCHANAN,

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'We will hear thee again of this matter.'—Acts xvii. 32. “And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, *Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.*”—Acts xxiv. 24.

I HAVE placed these two passages of Scripture together, because they serve to illustrate, by their coincidence, the aversion of the unregenerated mind to spiritual and divine truths. In the one case, the giddy and licentious Athenians had brought up the Apostle to the public court of their city, where their philosophers, and wise men, and multitudes of the people, were assembled. They had done so neither with the desire nor with the expectation of hearing any thing useful or important; for as they, in their vain-glorious admiration of their own wisdom and ingenuity, esteemed the men of all other countries to be little better than barbarians, while they, no doubt, conceived that, by the novelty of this stranger's opinions they should find matter for amusement, they were themselves far too well skilled in every department of knowledge to receive from a despised Jew any thing deserving the name of instruction. Let us hear, said they, what this babbler will say. No sooner had they perceived from the solemnity of St. Paul's discourse—condemning as it did the folly and wickedness of their prevailing idolatry—revealing to them right views of the Creator and governor of the world—assuring them of the coming of a day in the which the world should be judged in righteousness; no sooner, I say, had they perceived from the solemnity of this discourse, that their levity was to be disappointed of its object—that, instead of listening to what might furnish them with a subject of merriment, they were called on to attend to truths which so strongly reprobated their prevailing idolatry, than they at once put an end to a discourse so very different from what they either wished or anticipated. “We will hear thee again of this matter.” In the other case, again, the Apostle had been invited to speak not from any conviction of the truth, or importance of the views he was known

to be engaged in promulgating, but merely to gratify the curiosity of a Roman governor, and of a profligate Jewess, who had forsaken her lawful husband, to unite herself to a godless heathen. When, however, the Apostle, regardless of his own safety, began to declare that measure of divine truth, which the case and circumstances of the parties he was addressing seemed to require—when he began to reason of righteousness, of temperance, and of judgment to come, the conscience of Felix smote him, and he trembled. But instead of inquiring, like the jailor at Philippi, what he must do to be saved, his whole anxiety was to get rid of a subject which so alarmed and disquieted his mind: “Go thy way,” said he, “for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.” In seeking, however, to make an application of the language of these idolaters to the case and circumstances of professing Christians, it will be necessary to show that the feeling by which they were actuated, is one which still continues extensively to operate in every congregation of hearers of the Word. I am well aware that it may at first sight appear altogether inconsistent to class any of you, for example, with the persons who said to the preacher of the Gospel, “We will hear thee again of this matter;” or with Felix, who said, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.” They had heard of this matter only once, and that with so little relish, that they refused to hear more of it; nay, they put off the farther consideration of it to a period which they had no intention ever should arrive; whereas you, or many of you, have not only heard of this matter, but have seldom allowed one Sabbath to pass by, without coming up to the house of God to hear of this matter again. How can it then, some may be ready to exclaim, with any

show of truth or probability, be alleged of us, that we have taken up the language of these idolaters, and have said to the preacher of the Gospel, "We will hear thee again of this matter?" But if it be remembered in what source these words had their origin, and if it be borne in mind that it was in a principle which did not belong to the men by whom these words were spoken, as individuals, but as members of the family of mankind, you will then see the danger of being over hasty in concluding, that the language of the text can have no application to any of us. The Scriptures repeatedly declare, that the heart of man—not of this man more than of any other man, but the heart of man considered as one of the sons of fallen Adam—is by nature enmity against God, and receiveth not the things of his Holy Spirit. That this enmity is not eradicated by the mere profession of Christianity, was sufficiently and lamentably proved in the case of Judas, who, though for three years one of the closest and most immediate followers of Jesus to all outward appearance, was nevertheless all the while the bond-slave of Satan. And to go no farther than to the experience of your own hearts; have you never felt this principle of aversion to divine truth, instigating you to turn away from the society or conversation of those who were manifestly living in the faith, and hope, and holiness of the Gospel? Does not the conscience of any here present plead guilty to the charge that this matter spoken of before us is not a matter on which they delight to meditate? When the awful threatenings of the Bible against sin and unrighteousness have been set forth by some faithful disciple of the Lord Jesus; when the unspeakable consolations it administers have been spoken of in terms of humble and grateful admiration; when their unspeakable importance may be contrasted with the comparative worthlessness and insignificance of all other subjects and pursuits; have not you felt at such a time a disposition to change the tone of the conversation, and to escape to something more worldly, and therefore more congenial, to your inclinations? Or, to put the matter in a different point of view; when you have been alone by yourselves, or in your families, and when the Bible, which contains this matter in all its fulness, has been lying within your reach, and when you have just returned, it may be, from the house of God, and when every thing was thus conducting to lead your desires and meditations towards the one thing needful; have you rejoiced in

the opportunity thus afforded, of gaining more knowledge and more grace; and have you turned and addressed yourselves to the work with interest and assiduity? or, on the contrary, have you to acknowledge that you wasted the precious season in unprofitable conversation about the things of this world, or in longing for the conclusion of a day which deprived you of your wonted pleasures? Let your hearts speak true to inquiries like these, and if the cases of any correspond to what has now been described, then are they virtually in the very situation of those who said to Saint Paul of old, "We will hear thee again of this matter." While we would thus endeavour to show how close an application the words before us may still bear to the cases and circumstances of many professing Christians, it is neither wished nor intended that the discourse upon this subject should be regarded as addressed only to those who hitherto have been putting off the serious consideration of the things that belong to their peace. Even the man who is most interested in this great work, is conscious of being much less diligent in it than its unspeakable importance would so abundantly authorize. He will be the very first to own with humility how ready he is at all times to be scared from the Cross, and to give way to the temptations of this world; and most readily, therefore, will he listen to any thing that has a tendency to deepen his conviction of the importance of the work he has on hand, and of letting slip no opportunity of making his election sure. It is with this conviction that I would call on both classes of this congregation—for there can be, strictly speaking, but two classes, those who do savingly believe, and those who do not savingly believe, the truth as it is in Jesus—to attend to the three following considerations, which naturally suggest themselves to the mind, in contemplating the words we have read as the subject of our discourse. The first consideration is the source from which this matter proceedeth, which Felix and the Athenians refused to hear. The matter which they put away from them, was the Word of the living and true God. The next consideration is the interest which they had, and which all men have in giving diligent heed to it; because it is a matter which concerns the welfare of their immortal souls. And the third consideration is the reason why the attention which this matter demands, instead of being put off to a more convenient season, ought not to be deferred for

one day, nor for one hour ; because we know not what a day or an hour may bring forth.

In the first place, then, we have to consider that the matter which Felix and the Athenians refused to hear, was the Word of the living God. When any statement is presented to us, professing to embody a rule of action by which any part of our life or conduct is required to be regulated, we are undoubtedly entitled to inquire upon whose authority it is issued. If it be the requisition of some personage inferior to ourselves, and who is destitute of any right to subject us to his control, he has no reason to complain if we neglect or disregard it. But if, on the other hand, it be the express and required will of a superior whom we are bound to respect and to obey, there is then no longer any freedom of choice ; he is entitled to expect implicit submission at our hands to what he has enjoined, and, moreover, he is called on, as he respects his own dignity, and the sanctions of his authority, to punish any expression of indifference to what he has required, as an act of rebellion against his sovereignty. Now, inquire, under which of these two descriptions does that messenger come ; who began to publish to Felix and Drusilla within the walls, and to the Athenians in the Areopaginal Athens ? Had the Apostle appeared in either of these situations, with the delegated authority of a Roman emperor, bearing in his hand an imperial decree, would they have dared to interrupt him in the delivery of his message, by telling him they would hear him at a more convenient season ? Had that decree commanded the abrogation of their most favourite laws, or to fling into the sea their thousand idols, which degraded while they seemed to adorn their city, they would no doubt have hastened to a submission to which they would have been otherwise compelled by those hardy legions who had subdued the world ; and yet when the ambassador, not of an earthly monarch, but of Him through whom kings reign, and princes decree justice, appeared in their presence, he was not even suffered to finish the message he was commissioned to declare. They were rebellious subjects, every action of whose lives had been a movement of insubordination, and every circumstance of whose hearts had been the working of a seditious spirit. He came to them like a herald from their Almighty King, presenting in the one hand the olive branch of peace, and displaying in the other the sword of

inflexible justice and resistless power. He showed them mercy, and spoke also of judgment, but they answered as if they neither valued his favour, nor feared his frown. True it is, it may be perhaps objected to this method of illustrating the subject, that neither the Athenians nor Felix were assured that Paul was an ambassador for Christ, and therefore were under no obligation to receive his message as a message of the living and true God. But had the Apostle appeared in either of these situations, professing to be the bearer of an imperial edict, would it have been regarded at the imperial court as a good defence of their disregard of the decree, that they disbelieved the authority of the messenger by whom it was sent ? They were not bound, unquestionably, to recognise an unknown individual as the accredited envoy of their sovereign ; but if he was prepared to exhibit his commission, bearing the imperial signature and royal seal, would they be justified in shutting their eyes against the evidence of the authority with which he was invested ? Assuredly not ; and yet this is the whole amount of the defence that could be made in behalf of these men, in refusing to listen to the preaching of the Gospel. They professed undoubtedly to disbelieve that St. Paul was the messenger of the living and true God ; but this disbelief, instead of being their excuse, was the very head and front of their crime. They would not listen to the evidence he was setting before them of the commission he had received—evidence which their own consciences already approved, for their consciences evidently told them that it was the truth he was declaring in their presence. To them, therefore, with justice might the words of the prophet be applied : " Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish ; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." But, my brethren, if it be evident that even these idolaters could not justify their disregard of the preaching of the Gospel, on the ground of their professing to disbelieve the authority of Him by whom it was preached ; much less, surely, can any of you justify your neglect of that message, seeing that all of you doubtless profess to acknowledge it to be the Word of the living and true God. And remember, that it is not the mere circumstance of your acknowledging the Bible to be the Word of God, that proves you are not treating it as it was treated by these idolaters of old ; on the

contrary, if, at the same time that you admit that word to be the Word of God, you practically treat it with indifference and neglect, you are just furnishing the Great Judge of all with an argument whereby to condemn you from your own mouths.

But we proceed next to consider the interest which they had, and which all men have in giving diligent heed to this message, because it is a message in which the welfare of their immortal souls is concerned. It has been my purpose, in the preceding division of discourse, to show that the simple consideration of God's sovereignty and property in us constitutes in itself an imperative and indissoluble obligation, to receive with reverence and docility whatever revelation of his will he may vouchsafe to make known. Had that message imparted no blessing or advantage to man; had it been intended to exact some new tribute of submission; had it been impossible to comply with its demands, save at the expense of much labour and many privations—still was man bound, without one moment's hesitation, to comply with its requirements. Man is the creature of God's hand, and it is for him to do as he will with his own. But when, after taking up this fundamental position, we look around us on what is embraced in that sacred consideration we now propose to notice, we shall find our obligation to be deepened, and powerfully strengthened and confirmed. If we attend to the history of the world, previous to the diffusion of the Gospel, surely any one of those books in which its history is contained, will satisfy us how strictly the fact corresponds to the statement of Scripture, that all men had corrupted their way—that they had altogether become unprofitable—that there was none righteousness, no, not one. And if we were to select, as a specimen of humanity, that nation from whose citizens the Apostle received the contemptuous answer we have been considering—a nation which regarded itself, and was very generally regarded by other nations, as the very centre of civilization and refinement; I believe it would be difficult to point out any one corner of the earth in which men had departed farther from God, and were more wholly given over to a reprobate mind. Surely, then, it was an act of infinite condescension in a God of holiness and purity to make to such creatures any revelation of his will at all; a conclusion which is powerfully strengthened by the consideration that this state of universal wickedness [and depravity was the consequence of a wilful departure from a state of

blessedness and peace. But if we consider still farther what was the purpose contemplated by God, in sending to this guilty and rebellious race a revelation of his will at all, we shall find our conviction of his unspeakable condescension and love most powerfully enlarged, and, at the same time, our conviction of man's ingratitude proportionably strengthened and confirmed. What was the purpose contemplated by God, in sending abroad his messengers to be witnesses unto him by the declaration of his Word, both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth? Were we to form our estimate of that purpose, by simply considering what man might reasonably expect from God, what else could we expect that message to announce, but judgment without mercy, righteous indignation unmitigated and unrestrained? And had this been the declaration, what could man have had to oppose to its execution? Assuredly not one of us could have answered even for one of a thousand of our offences. But the great purpose contemplated by God in sending this message to man, was just to show that he could be a just God, and yet the justifier of the ungodly, who believe in the name of Jesus. Does he then, as it has been well observed by a late pious and eminent Divine, speak to us sinners about the way of eternal salvation; and shall we refuse to listen to his gracious words? Does he disclose to us those glories which angels contemplate with unceasing rapture; and shall we turn away with contemptuous aversion? Does he contemplate such a wonderful plan of redemption, that the sinless angels desire to look into it; and shall we account the subject unworthy of our notice? Were we to receive a communication from a fellow-creature respecting the line of conduct we ought to pursue for the attainment of any temporal object, our first inquiry would certainly be directed with a view to ascertain the ability and good-will of him from whom the advice proceeded. If the result of this was a conviction that he was unfit to form a just idea of our interest, or unable to give us any service in the matter to which he referred, we should then unquestionably hold ourselves acquitted of any obligation to abide by his advice. But if, on the other hand, the relation in which he stood to us was such as to entitle him to our countenance; and if his established reputation for prudence and sagacity was such as to claim deference and respect for all his opinions; surely we must plead guilty to the charge of a violation of gratitude, if, nevertheless, we

persist in neglecting his counsel. If, still further, this communication was such as to bear on its very face the evidence of its sufficiency, for the purpose for which it was given—the evidence of its being in all its parts a pure emanation of its author's disinterested affection; surely we must be guilty of the charge of the foulest ingratitude, or the uttermost folly, in persisting to neglect his counsel. Now, if we apply this to the consideration of this matter which Felix and the Athenians refused to hear, what is the conclusion at which we must arrive? The author of this counsel we have seen to be none other than that God who is infinite, eternal, unchangeable in his being, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth; for to think that this message is given by inspiration of heaven—that it is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chiefcornerstone—is surely more than sufficient to convince us of the ability of this Wonderful, this Counsellor, this mighty God, from whom the message has proceeded. If God is a Counsellor, with regard to our condition, we may then inquire, What evidence can be obtained of his good-will to men? But may we not ask, What but a purpose of free mercy could have induced this glorious Being to send to a race of creatures, such as we, any revelation of his divine will or counsel at all? Man, it is true, may be influenced by selfish, or even by sinister, designs, in giving counsel to his fellows; but the infinite perfection of God is immeasurably removed above all the circumstances of his creatures. We are not left, however, to prove the disinterested love of God in sending this counsel by the mere consideration of the perfection of his nature; for the whole of this communication is founded and built upon an act of divine love—the length and breadth of which we may wonder at and adore, but the ten thousandth thousandth part of which we can never fully or adequately perceive. In speaking of it, we can only take up the language of the Apostle: "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!" "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Such, surely, must be the conclusion at which we must arrive, in considering the ability and good-will of him from whom communication proceeds. If,

then, under the influence as it were of this predisposing cause, to give to this communication a cordial welcome and diligent consideration, we proceed still farther to examine what is the special evil which the Author of this communication designs to remove from us, and the special blessing he proposes to convey to us, we shall assuredly find at every step of our procedure increasing cause to condemn the folly and ingratitude of those who, like the Athenians, refuse to listen to the Word of God. The evil which God, in his Word, purposes to remove, is the evil of sin—an evil so great, as to have alienated a whole world from a state of blessedness and peace, and to have plunged them into a state of wretchedness and ruin—an evil of such poisonous and baneful power, as to have transformed the heart from love, peace, holiness, goodness, and truth, into a heart out of which are continually proceeding emulations, strifes, wrath, seditions, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings—an evil which all men know to be a source of unceasing pain and disquietude in this life, and which assuredly all who refuse to accept the remedy shall find to be a source of endless and unutterable pain in the life to come. And what is the special blessing which the Author of this divine communication purposes to convey to us? It is the blessing of pardon—the blessing of peace; it is the blotting out of our iniquities, and the casting our transgressions into the depths of the sea; it is the breaking down of that wall of separation, which our own impious hands had reared between us and God to a pitch and elevation such as God only was able to overthrow; it is our restoration to the presence and favour of that God at whose right hand there is fulness of pleasures for evermore. The sum, then, of the argument on this part of the subject is, that if you have any fear of divine wrath, and any desire after divine favour—that if you have any hatred of sin, of itself and its consequences—if you have any desire after that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord—if you have any dread of the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched; and any longing after that blessedness eye hath not seen nor ear heard—then give heed to the matter presented to you in this Word of truth, for it is a matter involving the spiritual, the welfare of your souls.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 18TH JANUARY, 1834

No. 95.

SERMON by the Rev. JAMES BUCHANAN, North Leith.
SERMON by the Rev. THOMAS BROWN, D.D., Glasgow.

Price 2d.

THE GUILT AND DANGER OF DELAYING THE CONCERN'S OF
ETERNITY;

A Sermon preached by the Rev. ROBERT BUCHANAN.—Concluded.

LASTLY. In conclusion, let us very shortly consider the reasons why the attention which this matter so imperatively demands, instead of being put off till a more convenient season, ought not to be deferred for one day nor for one hour, because we know not what a day or an hour may bring forth. When the Athenians and Roman Governor interrupted the preaching of the Gospel, with the words which have engaged our attention, we are fairly entitled to conclude, from a consideration of all the circumstances of the two cases, that they had no intention of ever renewing the consideration of that subject they thus proposed only to defer. They had heard enough of St. Paul's doctrine to convince them that it was too holy to afford them any toleration of their licentious and ungodly pleasures—too solemn and impressive to be made the subject of mirth—too pure to be opposed; and, therefore, to get rid of a subject they had no disposition to embrace, but which yet they could find no reason to challenge with contradiction, they pretended to put off the consideration of it to a period which manifestly they had no intention should ever arrive. It may be, perhaps, that those who follow a similar course among ourselves, may think that there is, at all events, this difference between their case and that of these idolaters of old, that they really have some vague and indefinite purpose of seriously taking up the consideration of religion at some future period, and flattering them-

selves with this idea, perhaps they think that there is less danger in their case. Felix and the Athenians were not likely to come frequently in contact with the preachers of the Gospel; and, therefore, in putting it away from them at that time, it was most likely they might never again have an opportunity of hearing it; whereas those who excuse themselves for the present, may think it is very different with them; that they have an opportunity every Sabbath-day of coming up to the house of God, and the subject they think they may take up at any time, and there is no reason, therefore, why they should betake themselves so carefully to it now. Truly is it said that the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and this is just one of the most dangerous and fatal of its wiles. To what does such a mode of reasoning amount but just this? Is it not plain that the men who speak to themselves concerning the Gospel after this fashion, if really they could avoid it, would never seriously consider the Word of God at all? If it was that this life was to be eternal—if there was no judgment before them—it is plain, from the manner in which they speak, that they would never consider the subject of the Gospel more seriously than they do at present; and it is because they do not like it that they put it away from them, and only because of some necessity likely to arrive that they turn their attention to it at all. Surely those who thus, by their own confession, would only turn to God from

necessity—that is, from a conviction of there otherwise being inflicted on them, as individuals, an eternal ruin, cannot expect of God to continue his mercy towards them; surely they cannot expect but that they who thus harden their hearts, should be given over to their own reprobate minds—that God should cease to strive with them, and leave them in their state of impenitence and unbelief. But, besides all this, which ought to alarm such men, what security have they, that the time to which they are looking forward shall ever be afforded them? What security have they, that if they refuse to listen to the Gospel at this moment, they will ever hear the sound of it again? Have they not examples every day, of men called in an instant to give in their account, while engaged in the midst of all the business, pleasures, and pursuits of this world, without ever having seriously turned their minds to a preparation for eternity? Have they the least shadow of security that it may not be

so with them? And if they persist to refuse the invitations of the Gospel, entreating them by the mercy of God to be reconciled through the blood of atonement—if they refuse that invitation now, they may never be permitted to hear the invitation again. Let them remember, “that now is the accepted time, that now is the day of salvation;” and if they desire to avoid the danger of provoking God, to withdraw his Spirit from them, let them, if such there be in this assembly, who have been hitherto putting away from them the serious considerations of divine truths, from this instant give their minds to the things that belong to their peace. Let them seek the Lord while he may be found—let them call upon him while he is near—let them forsake their wicked ways and their unrighteous paths—let them turn to the Lord, and he will still have mercy upon them, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon them. May God bless his word. Amen.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST;

AN ACTION SERMON

By the Rev. JAMES BUCHANAN,

Minister of North Leith Church.

“Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”—Rev. i. 5, 6.

The book in which this passage is contained is called the Revelation of Jesus Christ, not only because, like the other books of Scripture, it was indited or inspired by him as the great teacher of the Church; but, especially, because in it he is himself revealed in a condition very different from that described by the Evangelist, as the condition of his life on earth. During his sojourning in the flesh, he appeared in a state of deep humiliation; and touching indeed is the representation which the Evangelists give of him as the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. But it was fitting not less for his honour than for the encouragement and consolation of the Christian Church, that some revelation should be made to them of the glory that was to follow his shame; and that he should

be exhibited in his own character, and in the exercise of his exalted functions in the invisible world, as the first begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. According to the evangelical narrative, the book of Revelation was added, that, as in the former his people read of the progress of his work on earth, so, in the latter, they should see his elevation in heaven; and that, while they over the tale of his earthly sorrows, tremble at the depth of his humiliations, they should also rejoice that he reached the joy that was set before him; and that now all power is given him in heaven and on earth. His was recorded; his exaltation was only as the beloved disciple has given us

of his earthly sorrows, when oftentimes he had not where to lay his head. Unto him also it was given to behold, in vision, the glory of his exalted state, and to write this precious book, in which, more than in any other, the condition of the spiritual world is laid open, and his divine Master is exhibited as seated on the throne of universal sovereignty, and surrounded with angels and multitudes of the redeemed. In the very threshold of this divine revelation of his risen Lord, the beloved disciple on whose bosom he had leaned, breaks forth, in the name of the whole Christian Church, into a lofty strain of adoration and praise; and, connecting the work of the Redeemer on earth with its consummation in that scene of glory laid open to him, he exclaims, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

I observe first, that in this song the redeemed make grateful mention of the love of Christ: that being the spring of all their present privileges, and all their future hopes, "to him that loved us." And this is well put first in order, not only, because it is the source of every spiritual blessing, but also, because it is in itself their chief happiness—they being the objects of his love; and every ingenuous mind will more esteem the kindly heart, than the costly gifts of a benefactor. Thus did the psalmist feel, when, selecting the most precious of God's temporal mercies, he says, "Because thy love is better than life, therefore my lips shall praise thee;" and so, because the love of the Redeemer is in itself no less valuable than any of those gifts that flow from it, it is here first mentioned in the song of the redeemed. Now remember that we are depraved and fallen creatures, as implied here; and that Christ is a divine person of infinite dignity and greatness, as is also implied in his here being represented as the object of worship. Let us endeavour to form some estimate of the nature of that love which is declared to exist between parties so widely separated as the Son of God and the children of men. How, in ordinary cases, do we estimate the strength of a friend's affection for us? Is it in the first instance by the ardour with which he loves us, in words, where at least we have reason to confide in his lips?

Then what are the tokens in
of his people?

loved them with an everlasting love; fore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee;" "my delights are with the sons of men." "The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee." "I have called you not servants, but friends; my little children, my sheep, my flock."

Again, does it enhance our esteem of the kind and benevolent heart of a friend, when his kindness is offered and continued, notwithstanding we have given him cause of offence, when he visits and cares for us in spite of provocation; and is that friendship sufficient to melt the hardest heart which requires every offence with forgiveness, and suffers us not to sink under an unworthy injurious return? Then is Christ such a friend. He loved us while we were his enemies, and heaping insult on the government of his Father. "Ye have not chosen me," is his own pathetic language, "but I have chosen you."

Again, is the love of a friend the more valued because it comes to us in circumstances of great destitution or distress; when we have fallen back in the world, and are reduced to straits, and will want a steady friend, whom adversity cannot shake, to cheer our hearts when they are chilled by the heartless desertion of others who once rejoiced with us when we rejoiced, but will not weep with us when we weep? Now, it was when we were wretched, and miserable, and poor, that the Redeemer loved us. He came to us when we were lost, and the most miserable were his peculiar care. His office was to bind up the broken hearted, and to make the mourner glad.

Again, do we appreciate the friendship which we have reason to believe has no connexion with selfish motives or personal ends? The friendship of the Redeemer was purely disinterested. He had no object to serve by it, except—that one object of pure benevolence—to deliver us from misery, and restore us to God and happiness. It is true, as it is said, that he undertook our salvation in order that he might glorify God, and that we should glorify him. But this, when understood rightly, affords only a new proof of the extent of his love; for what is it to glorify God, and to glorify him who is the Son of God? Not

the happiness of the Godhead, for this we are unfit to do; but to make known, to illustrate the divine excellence: in other words to make men familiar with the true character of their Maker, in order that by knowing they might be brought to love him, and by loving to enjoy him. As this is the very highest knowledge and noblest happiness of which our nature is capable, and as this end was contemplated by our Saviour, that consideration ought to enhance our estimate of the extent and comprehensiveness of his love. It is true it is also said that the Saviour was promised a reward for his obedience and sufferings; and that he kept that reward steadily in view, during his course of shame; and that it was for the joy set before him, that he endured the cross, despising the shame. Yes; but what was the reward that was promised? what was the joy that was set before him? Just such as none but disinterested love would have esteemed a reward at all. The only reward which he sought was the salvation of his people. The only joy that was set before him was, that he should see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. And what an amazing view of the freeness of the Redeemer's love is here presented to us, when the Son of God counts it his joy, his honour, his reward, to seek and to save the lost!

Again, do we estimate the strength of a friend's affection for us by his fondness for our society, by his affording us free access at all times, and by the frequency and kindness of his invitations to meet us? Then with what condescension has the Redeemer invited, nay, urged and besought his people to repair to him as their friend, as "a very present help to them, in every time of need!" "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and ye that have no money, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." "Whosoever cometh unto me, shall in no wise be cast out." Nay, he does not wait for our coming; but with the familiarity of a friend he comes to us; and even when he finds our hearts closed against him, he waits. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man will hear my voice, and will open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me."

Again, do we estimate the strength of a friend's affection by the sacrifices he makes,

or by the personal sufferings he endures, for our sakes? Then what sacrifice is so great, what sufferings so severe as those of the Son of God? "Although he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich; he humbled himself and made himself of no reputation, and took the form of a servant, and became obedient to the death, even the death of the cross. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend." But here we were enemies—"Christ died for the ungodly." Yes, my brethren, to estimate aright the sacrifices which he made, we must form some conception of the contrast between the glory of the Son of God in his pre-existing state in heaven, and the depth of his humiliation on earth; and to estimate the sufferings he endured, we must look to the groans of Gethsemane, and the cross of Calvary; and, remembering that it was a divine sufferer who was there in an agony, let us listen to his own confession: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death. I have a baptism to be baptized with; but how am I straitened till it be accomplished! O, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt—they will be done."

Again, do we estimate the kindness of an earthly friend by his long-suffering patience in bearing with our infirmities, indulging, or at most meekly reproving, our weakness, and in dealing tenderly with us, even when we most try his patience by our provocations? And what believer, when he looks back on the way by which the Saviour has been leading him, and reflects on the numerous backslidings with which he is chargeable—his slowness of heart in believing, his inaptness to receive instruction, his frequent indisposition to improve by it; and above all, on the preference which his heart gives to the world, when Christ requires at his hand the homage of supreme affection; what believer can fail to acknowledge that he is a living monument of the Redeemer's mercy, an unprofitable servant whom none but divine patience could have spared, a wayward disciple, who stands indebted to his master's kindness that he has not long ago been cut down as a cumberer of the ground?

Again, do we estimate it a singular mark of friendship, so rare that we seldom expect it, that notwithstanding when thus exert-

in our behalf, another should us and ours in his heart at a throne of and remember us then when his warmest affections are in exercise at the hour of prayer? Then, is not Christ our intercessor in heaven? Has he not long remembered us, and pled our cause in God's immediate presence? Does he not bear every one of his disciples in his heart at the throne on high, suffering neither the glories of his exalted state, nor the cares of his universal government, to obliterate from his thoughts his suffering people here; here, even as when he sojourned among us, and his deepest sorrows were for a time forgotten, that he might pour out his heart in prayer to God for the disciples that were very soon to forsake him and flee.

Finally, do we rest with confidence on the friendship of one who identifies himself with us, and acts as if our interests and his own were the same? Then is Christ the friend of his people. Whoso, saith he, receiveth you receiveth me: whoso shall give but a cup of cold water to one of these little ones, in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose his reward; "When I was hungry ye gave me meat; when I was thirsty ye gave me drink; when I was naked ye clothed me; when I was in prison ye visited me; insomuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye did it unto me." Combining these considerations in connexion with those special tokens of the Saviour's love to him, as each believer may find in his own personal experience, we might form some estimate, although it must ever be a faint one, of the reasons on which the song before us was founded; and we see how well the consideration of Christ's love, even if that love had not been productive of a single effect, ought to lead us to cry out, on this day of jubilee, "Unto him that loved us be glory and dominion for ever and ever!"

But that love was not without effect, and the beloved disciple advert's to some of the benefits which have flowed from it to his people. In the second place, He has washed us from our sins in his own blood. Here the Apostle gratefully makes mention of one of the principal effects that have flowed from the Redeemer's love; and the word implies that the Saviour's blood was shed, and shed for the remission of sins; and it was a noble proof of his love. But the words imply a great deal more. They intimate that, besides

shed, that blood had been savagely

applied, and had sufficient efficacy to wash them from their sins. And believers will ever regard the saving application of that blood to their consciences as no less proof of the Redeemer's kindness than the fact of his having shed it; for they knew that if he had done nothing more than offered himself a sacrifice for sin, and then left them to the devices of their own hearts, they would have continued like heathens to despise or neglect his salvation, or to trample his blood under their feet; but by the influence of his Spirit he made them a willing people in the day of his power—he taught them to flee from the wrath to come; and by many such warnings, and intimations, and encouragements, he led them to repair to that fountain which he has opened for sin, and for uncleanness. His love in leading them to that fountain is not less to be celebrated than his love in having opened it, especially when it is considered that, without such a personal application of his blood to them individually, his death would have been of no avail. But being led to repair to that fountain they were not disappointed; they found that no barrier obstructed their approach to it—that free access was graciously vouchsafed to all, and they experienced that the blood of Jesus Christ cleansed them from all sin. They washed and were cleansed; and just in proportion as their sins were great, their punishment awful and certain, their fears strong and harassing, and their sense of indwelling corruption oppressive and overwhelming, in the same proportion must they value the Saviour's blood; for by that blood all their transgressions, from infancy to age, were wiped away. By that blood they were delivered from the burden of an accusing conscience, and admitted into peace and friendship with God. By that blood they were delivered for ever from judgment to come. By the same blood the power of sin was broken, unholy passions subdued, and the polluted spring of their hearts purified, insomuch that, from the hour in which they first were washed in that fountain, they date the commencement both of their safety and of their sanctification. Whatever value they attach to the favour of God and the light of his countenance—to inward satisfaction and peace of mind—to the growing sanctification of their nature, or the great change by which they

from death unto life, and were trans-

all this is to be ascribed to the efficacy of

that peace-speaking blood, the blood of the covenant wherewith they have been sanctified, and whereby their consciences have been purged from dead works to serve the living and true God.

I observe, in the third place, that the design of the Saviour was not accomplished, nor his love exhausted, by pardoning the sins of his people. It was his design to advance them as monuments of his grace to a state of great dignity, and to employ them in a very exalted station. Accordingly he made them kings and priests unto God. If we inquire into the special signification of these terms, I apprehend that they may be best interpreted by viewing them as corresponding with the language of the Apostle, in another place, where he speaks of believers as a royal priesthood. We may doubtless find a warrant in Scripture for representing Christians as, in a spiritual sense, kings unto God, by virtue of their union to Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. They are members of the body of which he is the Head, and may be said to enjoy through him a limited royalty, especially as the time is coming when, having obtained the victory over their enemies, he shall give them to sit upon his throne, even as he also overcame and sat down with his Father on his throne. It is also intimated to us that they hereafter shall judge angels, and that they shall reign with Christ upon the earth. Whatever special signification may be attached to the terms taken separately, it is at least strongly expressive of the dignity which belongs to them, and it is here conjoined with their priesthood, which denotes the holiness of their character and the nature of their service. They continued invested with an office which may well be called a royal priesthood, inasmuch as they are the ministering servants of the King of kings and Lord of lords. It was a promise of old to the Church, that at the coming of Christ, his people should be called the priests of the Lord and the ministers of their God; and accordingly the apostle Peter applies this honourable appellation to Christians in general, and at the same time intimates the nature of this service, which God expects at their hands. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ;" and, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises

of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." It is true indeed that, as by the one sacrifice of Christ the work of redemption was accomplished, so there is no more sacrifice for sin; and in this respect therefore their priesthood can bear no resemblance to that of their Saviour. No: this is significantly intimated by the very connexion of the words in the text; for, as under the Jewish law, the priests were ordained to be washed before they entered on their service, in token of their own inherent uncleanness, and their need to be washed in the blood of atonement; so here it is first said, of believers, they are washed from their sins in his blood, and, it is added, they are kings and priests unto God. Nor does it form any part of their duty to offer up material sacrifices, such as were in use with the Jews; for these were of temporary use, and as shadows were done away with, when the substances were revealed. But they are priests notwithstanding; they are required to offer up, day by day, spiritual sacrifices to God, and these are distinctly specified in Scripture to be the graces of the christian spirit, expressed in thankful lips, and in the homage of an obedient life: thus penitence, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;" thus praise, "Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, even the fruits of our lips giving thanks to his name;" thus prayer, "Let my prayer be set forth before thee, as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice;" thus alms, "To do good and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Nay," says the Apostle, "I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, unto God, which is your reasonable service." From these intimations we learn that the sincere disciples of Jesus stand in a very intimate and honourable relation to God; they are raised through Christ to an office of high dignity and great responsibility; he has engaged to invest them with royal honours, and they stand engaged to render him priestly service. Even on earth they are as kings; and this shall be the character of all true communicants: and in their exalted employment they should enjoy a conscious dignity, and taste a kind of happiness to which other men are utter strangers, and of which they had themselves no conception, till brought out of darkness into marvellous light. But it remains for etern-

nity to unfold the full measure of their dignity as God's creatures. Heaven is the scene of their reward, this is the scene of their labour and trial; and of their after condition in heaven we can form only a faint idea, from the few glimpses we obtain of it in Scripture. But one glorious vision there is, which, while destitute and despised, and downcast on earth, they would do well frequently to contemplate—that vision wherein the beloved disciple was asked, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?" and was informed, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat: for the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Behold, brethren, the glorious consummation of the Redeemer's love, the grand consummation of your faith and your patience.

I observe, finally, that it is the natural fruit, and a strong evidence of faith, and at the same time a source of great spiritual comfort, to be much engaged in reflecting on the love of the Redeemer, and regarding with holy gratitude the benefits which you have received or yet expect at his hands; for while we thus meditate on his love, and on our own honour and privileges, as his people, our hearts will burn within us, and our lips break forth in his praise. Thus the beloved disciple no sooner thinks of the love of Christ, in washing his people from their sins, and making them a royal priesthood unto God, than, in the name of the whole Christian Church, he cries out, "Unto him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." And what believer can fail to join in that doxology, or withhold his tribute to his glory, or his wish for the universal dominion of the Saviour, especially at this season, when, in the good providence of God, he has again permitted us to engage in the communion service—a service which speaks as it were to our very senses the language and spirit of this song! Here, if any where, we should have the spirit of the priesthood,

and speak his praise; and it is an elevating thought, that in his service we but the same sentiments which in all ages have characterized his people, and which are even now felt by the whole company of the redeemed, whether in earth or in heaven. It is an elevating thought that here at least we meet on common ground, and may hold sweet fellowship, not only with our fellow-worshippers on earth, but also with those who have gone before us; for in heaven they are now singing a similar song, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests;" and perhaps were our power of hearing extended, there might even now fall on our listening ears the notes of the departed. To many among us, indeed, who are downcast and sorrowful, it may seem as if this strain were more fitted for those who have already fought the good fight, and finished their course, and received their crown, than for us who are still in the body, burthened with the remains of a corrupt nature; weak, yet beset with strong temptation; prone to backsliding, walking often in darkness, and having no light, and, at the very best, walking by faith, and not by sight. But may not the most desponding believer take courage at least from their success? May not their triumphant song inspire us with new hopes, since it tells us that men like ourselves have obtained the victory—that they who were poor on earth, are now rich in glory—that though vile, they have been raised to honour—though guilty, arrayed in white robes—though outcasts, restored—though wanderers, brought in—the most worthless, made welcome; and that after every difficulty and trial, they have at length been gathered up into heaven, and are now singing around the throne the same song they sung on earth? Even in the sadness of their hearts, it was their joy in the house of their pilgrimage; while, as if their praises were mingled with tears, it cheered their drooping spirits, and encouraged them to persevere. They sung that song, and so may you, if not with full assurance, yet with believing hope, with gratitude for what you have already tasted of the Redeemer's love, and with the humble confidence that you shall enjoy it more perfectly hereafter.

I am aware that some may have scruples or be prevented from coming to the table of

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the Lord, because they cannot with full assurance speak of their having been washed from their sins in his blood. But have you no hope in Christ, when you hear of the redeemed singing this hymn in the sanctuary above? And on this day of jubilee, when, with one accord, we have met to celebrate this redeeming love, will not your hearts, cold as they are, respond in some measure to its sentiments? What! Is there one believer to whom the Redeemer has shown so little kindness, that he has no matter for praise? Is that believer still in the land of the living and the place of hope who says so? Is it not of his Redeemer's mercy that he has not been consumed? And if he cannot speak of a peace and joy in believing, may he not at least celebrate his long-suffering patience, in not cutting him down as a cumberer of the ground? If we are downcast, because we are sensible of so lit-

tle love to him; should we not at least this day express our gratitude for his love to us? If we groan under the burden of indwelling sin, why should we not praise him, in whom alone we have the hope of being delivered from it? Yes, believers, we have all some subject of praise. Come then and offer your hearty tribute to the Saviour. Those only are debarred (it is matter of regret to us that any should be debarred at all) who have no desire for an interest in him, and no disposition to obey him, who reject his salvation, or, professing to receive it, bring scandal on his Cross by their dishonest, impure, or intemperate lives. The weakest believer, the most disconsolate, is encouraged to come to his table, and to offer there the tribute of thanks. Nay, my brethren, if you have nothing else to bring with you but a broken heart, a broken heart he will not despise.

THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS AS RESULTING FROM THEIR RELATION TO CHRIST;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL OF EASE, HOPE STREET, ON THE EVENING OF
SABBATH, 25th Nov. 1833, IN BEHALF OF THE CALTON SABBATH SCHOOLS.

By the Rev. THOMAS BROWN, D.D.,
Minister of St. John's Church, Glasgow.

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“*And ye are Christ's.*”—1 Cor. iii. 23

ALTHOUGH man is an immortal being, and destined for another state of existence; although his residence in this world is of very short continuance, and his time very uncertain; although his life is prolonged, and his continuance on earth is destined merely for his preparation for an eternal world; yet it is a fact, that many, that multitudes, that the great bulk of mankind entirely forget or lose sight of this. They live here as if they were to live always, or as if their existence terminated with their dropping the vestments of mortality. Hence it is that they make provision for the flesh solely, and lay up treasures on earth; hence it is that they estimate the world, and life, and time, and human efforts, and passing events just in proportion to the degree of temporal enjoyment they are fitted to yield and produce. God's views of things are the very reverse of this. Provision and preparation for the better part, for the soul and for eternity, is what he aims at in

all his dealings with the children of He knows what we have need of on earth, and provides accordingly; but for man's ultimate citizenship in heaven, it is the object of unerring Wisdom mainly to provide; and so far from estimating things from the proportion of sensual indulgence or temporal felicity they yield, he values every object and event in which man has an interest just in so far as they bear upon, and redound to, his spiritual and eternal well-being. And he that is really a child of God views things in precisely the same light; he counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord; he would be willing to sacrifice all, and to suffer the loss of all things, that he might win Christ. Now, as it is the purpose of God that all should subserve the best interests of his people, he actually makes all things work together for their good. When the Apostle says to the Corinthians, “all things are

yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." It is not an extravagant or an empty boast he makes; it is not a deceitful lure he holds out; it is not a hyperbolical or figurative mode of expression he employs; it is not a false or unrealized representation of a Christian's privilege he gives; for a child of God feels the truth of the Apostle's assertion; he can set to his seal, in as far as his experience can go, that God is faithful to the full extent of his promise—that the privileges of a believer are unspeakable—that life and things present are actually his, as he is persuaded that death when it arrives, and things to come, whether they shall fall out in the narrow space of time's duration, or in the illimitable duration of eternity, shall also be his. But the words of the text point out the foundation on which the Christian's secure possession of these blessings rests; they point out the channel through which they flow in upon him. The inheritance is great, and incalculably great beyond expression; but it is theirs, *because they are Christ's*. In order to understand the birth-right inheritance to which they are entitled, reflect that they were born children of wrath and heirs of hell; but now because they are Christ's, they are heirs of all covenant-blessings here, and joint-heirs with Christ of eternal felicity hereafter.

In treating of this subject, there are two points that claim our attention. First, in what respect Christians are Christ's; and in the second place, what is incumbent on them in consequence of the relation they hold to Christ. It is to the last of these that I propose to turn your attention at present; but I may just barely mention how the Christian may be said to be Christ's. He is Christ's by donation from the Father; he has been given by the Father to Christ, to be redeemed from wrath; he is his by redemption, by the purchased price of the blood of the eternal Son of God; he is his by conquest, he having obtained dominion and a victory over his enemies, and subdued all things to himself; and he is his in consequence of the Christian's voluntary surrender of himself unto the Lord. But it is to the second part of the subject, to which I wish now to turn your thoughts; what is incumbent on Christians in consequence of the relation Christ holds to them, and the

right he has established in them. And first it is their duty to cherish and exercise a spirit of constant and unfeigned humility. Are believers Christ's? they will feel themselves humbled at the recollection that they were once another's. If there is one grace more than another that is becoming creatures, and that is becoming ransomed sinners, it is humility; and wherever grace reigns, and there exists a renewed spirit, there it will invariably be found. While it is the characteristic of a child of God to glory in his Master, and to triumph in the riches of his grace and his power; it is no less characteristic of him to be lowly in his own estimation, and abased on account of his sin and corruption. The opposite of this spirit is indeed too prevalent. There is one who glories in his wisdom, and another who glories in his might, and a third who glories in his riches, and a fourth, it may be, who glories in his righteousness; but all this proceeds from ignorance and forgetfulness of our actual condition. As a creature, man has nothing by birth-right inheritance—nothing he can call his own, but sin. He draws not a single breath, he tastes not a single comfort, that is not the gift of heaven; and if one differs from another, who is it that is the cause of this difference? is it not by the grace of God that the man of highest attainments, of greatest spirituality, is what he is? Although a Christian is Christ's, he never loses sight or wishes to lose sight of the rock from whence he was hewn, or the hole and pit from whence he was dug. He never forgets that his mother was a Hittite, his father an Amorite, his eldest sister Samaria, and his youngest sister Sodom—that he is dead in trespasses and sins—that he is the slave of Satan, and the enemy of God. The recollection of what he once was keeps him lowly, and prevents that high-mindedness which was his destruction, and which, were it to gain ground, would bring him down from that lofty station he now holds as a child of God; for although he was carried up to the third heavens, although he was favoured with special marks of divine regard, and raised as much above the imperfections and infirmities of humanity, and as wakefully aware of the glorious privileges, and as firmly persuaded of his ultimate salvation as perhaps ever a Christian was; yet he never does forget that he was a persecutor, a blasphemer, and the very chief of sinners. Although a penitent prodigal restored to his

Father's embrace, gladdened by his Father's smiles, placed under the regular possession of plenty and peace under his paternal roof; yet he never forgets the days of his folly, his years of disobedience and rebellion, and the time when he sold himself to do iniquity. And the nearer a Christian gets to God, the more he is established in righteousness—the more secure as to his state and interest in Christ—the riper for heaven—and the more humble, the more abased he is on account of his iniquity. And there never can be a worse sign of a person's state, than when, in his high-mindedness, he has forgotten that he was conceived in sin; lost sight of his corruption; and given over bewailing for his transgressions. I need not say that a fall is then near; I may say, and say with confidence, that a sad fall has already taken place; for although a Christian has had the inward witness that he was given to Christ, though Christ were to tell him that his blood had purchased for him deliverance; such discoveries would extinguish this high-mindedness, and lead him to cast himself at the feet of Christ, saying, I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies. What am I that thou shouldst deal thus with me? Yea, when he shall have attained his eternal redemption, and shall be placed beyond the possibility of sinning, and put in possession of his inheritance, this grace shall be in its fullest exercise; for the saint must be sanctified before he is humbled. Humility is a part of his very existence, of his renewed nature, yea, of his glorified nature. And the recollection of his former ways and state from which he was rescued, shall not be awakened for the purpose of damping his joy, or impairing his felicity; yet, it shall perhaps present itself to his mind, for the purpose of manifesting that grace by which he was redeemed, and of heightening that felicity to which he was exalted, and of firing his heart with those anthems of praise—those hosannas to the Lamb that was slain, with which the arches of heaven shall resound through eternity.

In the second place, are believers Christ's? Have they been given to Christ by the Father? Have they been purchased by the price of the Saviour's blood? Have their enemies been subdued by his irresistible arm, and they themselves made willing, by his all-subduing grace, to surrender themselves to him? Then

The deeper a Christian's humility, the more he sees his unworthiness, the greater will be his acknowledgments of it. The more a Christian contemplates, and the more clear and realizing views he obtains of the depth and extent of his thralldom, and degradation, and misery, his heart is the more abased, and his song of praise for deliverance the more ecstatic.

If the Israelites, rescued from Pharaoh's yoke, and standing on dry ground, having emerged from the billows of the red sea, and beholding their enemies like lead sinking in the mighty waters, sang a song of triumph to the praise of their mighty deliverer; how must the Christian's heart swell when he reflects, that his soul has been delivered from death, and his eyes from tears, and his feet from falling! Men who have no deep views of sin—men whose hearts the arrows of conviction have never pierced—men who have never heard the deep calling unto them, nor felt God's billows going over them—men who have never seen that they were lost, and perishing, and miserable sinners, and never anticipated the coming wrath, cannot open their lips in grateful acknowledgments to heaven; for the soul that is not humbled cannot be grateful. A cup of cold water would draw forth more melting accents from a heart penetrated with a sense of unworthiness, than all the glories of earth, all the felicities of heaven would awaken in the heart of one such as I have just mentioned. But believers, they that are Christ's, have this experience. They have had scriptural views of the deplorable state to which the fall reduced them; they have had experimental conviction too of the bitterness, and demerit, and present degradation, and awful anticipations, and future fate of transgressors; they have had some ideas of the retribution of the coming wrath. And when they do consider and feel, that from darkness and bondage, and misery, and death they have been rescued, and that to light, and liberty, and felicity, and life, they have been restored—when they reflect that from the anger of God and the wrath to come, they have been delivered; that their fetters have been knocked off, and the dominion of Satan withdrawn, at the very moment when they were joining issue with the powers of darkness, at that very moment when they held the arms of rebellion in their hands, with rancour and hostility raging in their hearts; nay, when

they consider that in sovereign mercy they have been taken when others have been left—that they have been plucked as brands from everlasting burnings when others have been allowed to persist in their mad career, and perish in their sins—they are overwhelmed at the thought, they cannot find language to express their gratitude to the divine mercy; but, in the words of the Psalmist, they exclaim, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?” But this is not all. The mode of deliverance, the way in which Christians become Christ’s, awakens in their bosoms, more than any other consideration, the sensibilities of the soul. Had the Eternal stood on the circle of the earth, and with resistless voice said, I will—be thou saved! had he sent his angel as he did to Peter, to knock off his fetters and open his prison-doors; had he sent his destroying angel, as he did to the camp of the Assyrians, to free us from the great enemy of our peace, and deliver us from the vassalage in which we were held—with what expressions of gratitude must we have hailed the deliverance! But, O how much deeper the sense of gratitude! how much more enthusiastic the song of praise! when the Christian sees his help laid on Christ, his deliverance effected by the Redeemer wading through an ocean of distress; when he beholds his redemption wrought out by the Son of the everlasting God, the omnipotent Creator veiling himself in human form; when he sees his salvation effected by the King of glory stooping to the condition of a man of sorrows; when he finds that his peace has been purchased by the cries and groans of Gethsemane, and by the garments of the Prince of Peace rolled in blood on Calvary! If the angels, who are not interested in this precious deliverance, view with astonishment that sight; what must be the wonder and admiration of those who are the subjects of such surpassing love, and the fruit of such marvellous grace! When he that is Christ’s, then, realizes and brings near to view all these considerations, he cannot but use the language of the Apostle, and cry out, “O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out! O the height and the depth, and the length and the breadth of the love of God in Christ Jesus! it passeth all understanding.” And while he begins on earth to lisp the song of the redeemed above, he bewails that he cannot,

with more enraptured heart, celebrate the praises of redeeming love.

But in addition to this, while humility possesses the hearts of those that are Christ’s; while gratitude to the Redeemer, for what he has done for their souls, fires their bosoms, they also exercise a constant dependence and firm unshaken reliance upon Christ. Christ is all and in all to every Christian—they are every thing to him—they derive every thing from him—he is the purchaser of their every blessing, and he is the great medium of conveyance of all present, and future, and eternal benefits. All things are theirs in virtue of their relation to him. Christ is made of God to them wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and eternal redemption. Now, although it is not in virtue of any principle in us that privileges are conferred upon us, and continued with us; yet God has established it as an essential requisite in the Christian economy, that dependence on him should possess every heart which is made partaker of the blessings of the gospel. It is the tie in our breasts that binds us to our great living Head; and if a portion of that bond is broken, the union at least is weakened, and the advantage flowing from it is interrupted. Separate the branch from the trunk, and its vegetative power is gone; separate the limb from the body; and its animal life is at an end; destroy the Christian’s faith and reliance in the Redeemer, and his spiritual vigour is checked.

I might illustrate this from Scripture history. Man’s original fall is to be traced to his losing his dependence on God. So long as the children of Israel relied on the Lord their God, they were victorious over every enemy however powerful; and on the other hand, whenever they distrusted Jehovah their king, and trusted in an arm of flesh, and joined issue with the most powerful of the nations around, they were made to experience defeat and disaster. When the disciples trembled in the ship and cried, Master, we perish! he said to them, Where is your faith? And when Peter was ready to sink as, at the command of Christ, he walked on the water, Jesus said, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” and when he did shamefully yield to the force of temptation, and when he did deny and forsake his Master, it was, when that dependence, that implicit reliance on the Saviour was gone. Such a principle ceased to actuate him; and, trusting

to himself and his own feelings, he fell from his lofty eminence. Accordingly, it is the object of the enemy of souls to check this principle in the Christian; and unless he understands this, he will fall an easy prey to Satan's devices. "I have prayed," says Christ, "for thee, that thy faith fail not." And this principle runs through all the various gradations of love to God, and terminates in that tie in which man is bound to man. Dependence on Christ is the very spirit that unites them, and gives them an interest in one another. When the soldier confides in the energy and intrepidity of his general who leads him on to the conflict; when the subject trusts to the integrity and faithfulness of his judge and sovereign; when the patient relies on the skill, wisdom, and affection of the physician; when children cling to their parents, and the wife leans on her husband's arm; they are not merely cherishing a spirit which is becoming, and which constitutes duty, but a spirit which calls forth affection and the efforts of the other party, and the various acts that spring from these relations that have now been suggested. How much more fitting in the Christian, to lean to, and rely on, Christ! He holds all these and much more endearing relations to his people. He is their Creator, their Redeemer, their Comforter, their Sanctifier, their Father, their Friend, their All in all. Now, they that are Christ's, not merely acknowledge, but cherish and feel this, and live in the habitual exercise of trust and dependence on Christ as their great living Head. It was his blood that bought them; it was his arm that saved them; and it was his grace that rescued them from the jaws

of death. To Him, therefore, they ascribe the merit of their deliverance; on Him, and on Him alone, they rely for acceptance with God.

But the dependence of the Christian is not merely, so to speak, a retrospective view and exercise: the Christian relies not merely on the blood of Christ as the atonement for his sins and the price of his propitiation, but trusts to Christ for all that he stands in need of, as he prosecutes his journey through this wilderness, till he is established in glory. It is out of His fulness he expects to receive, and grace for grace. It is from Christ he gets provision for all his wants. I speak not merely of his temporal wants, but of what he stands in need of, in order to destroy the old man, to crucify the flesh, to root out the remains of corruption, to destroy the body of sin, and fit him for glory. Through him, and for his sake, he not only hopes to inherit the heavenly Canaan, but to him he looks for strength to vanquish the enemies of his peace, until he reaches the heavenly inheritance. He is persuaded that, unless he is strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, his resistance must be that of the infant. Leaning on the arm of Jesus, then does he lean on wisdom—then does he confide in mercy. He realizes, he feels that if ever he surmounts his difficulties, and resists his temptations, and overcomes his enemies; if ever his heart is to be moulded in conformity to the divine image, and his will and inclinations subjected to the will of God; and if ever he is to be made meet for heaven's inheritance, it is by the energy of the Son of God that this is to be effected.

(To be concluded in our next.)

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To whom all Communications should be addressed.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 25TH JANUARY, 1834.

SERMON by the Rev. THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D., Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT BUCHANAN, Glasgow.

THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS AS RESULTING FROM THEIR
RELATION TO CHRIST;

A Sermon preached by the Rev. THOMAS BROWN, D.D.—Concluded.

Now are we to suppose that this reliance on Christ, as has sometimes been insinuated, is to produce a callous indifference, a listless inactivity in such as are the subjects of it. Whatever of this may take place in some cases in ordinary life, it is the reverse in spiritual concerns; for while the word of God gives no countenance, or warrant for such a supposition, this very reliance awakens fervency of spirit, and rouses

energy of the soul. It will be found that he who trusts to himself is the least energetic—that he who places most reliance on his own efforts, disproves, by his very life and spirit, the doctrine he wishes to establish. He who relies implicitly on Christ for grace to help in time of need, is, of all others, most active for the work of his own salvation. He who proves, that except the Lord keep the city, the watchmen watch in vain, is of all men the most vigilant; and he who relies most firmly on the Captain of his Salvation, is the very man who strives most for the mastery. He is strong; but how but by the strength that is given to him? He who pleads with most earnestness the righteousness and merits of his Redeemer, is the person that is most unceasingly alive for his soul's well-being, and the glory of God. In short, I may say with confidence, that the man who exercises a firm and habitual reliance on Christ Jesus, is ever alive, ever active; while he who has

reliance beyond himself, actually does nothing. There is such imbecility in man, while he has so much at stake, and so much

to contend against, nay, such inability for the contest, that, but for this dependence on divine grace and strength, the Christian would sink in despair. But this renders him superior to every fear, this levels every mountain of difficulty, and carries him on his way rejoicing. How much is it the duty of such as are Christians to cherish this feeling! But it is no easy attainment to get the heart fixed in her fiducial dependence on the Redeemer. All men have not faith, and it is of all lessons the most difficult to learn; and not till a man is driven of necessity from every vain refuge, will the soul take its resting-place in Jesus, and place its confidence on the rock of ages. O! then, let it be your constant care that you may attain this happy spirit, and secure the anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast.

But I observe, in the last place, that they that are Christ's, must devote their lives unreservedly to his service. Christ's authority over us, and his property in us, is undisputed. Independent of his claim as Creator, he has established even a higher prerogative as our Redeemer. We have already seen that we were sold, and enslaved, and lost, by becoming the willing slaves of Satan, by casting off the authority of our righteous Sovereign, and assuming the yoke of sin—in this way, we rendered ourselves obnoxious to heaven, and subjected ourselves to eternal misery. But Christ bought us, and not with such corruptible things as silver and gold, but with his own precious blood. He unclosed the prison

doors, and laid open the gates of immortality for our reception. Now, if ever there was a title established, and an obligation formed, it is by Christ over his people. The Apostle might well say, "Ye are not your own." And did Christ set open the prison doors, that we might live as we listed? Did he purchase our liberty, that we might again sell ourselves to work iniquity? No. He gave us then power to become sons of God; he redeemed us to himself; he knocked off the fetters of Satan, that he might impose his own yoke; he delivered us from the thraldom of sin, that he might make us his own subjects; he gave himself for us, "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." It is surely the dictate of reason, as well as the voice of revelation, "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirits, which are God's." Surely when we reflect on the connexion Christ has established with his people, or the numberless obligations under which he has laid them, and on all he has done for them, the natural, I had almost said the necessary, cry would be, "Lord what wouldst thou have me to do?" Now, all he requires of us is to trust in him, and to obey the Gospel; and in doing so, Christ is surely no hard task-master; there is here no severe imposition; there is no hard saying in his requirements; his commandments are surely not grievous; his yoke is easy, his burden is light. The way is, indeed, narrow in which he directs his followers to walk, and there are few that find that way; but he leads and conducts them, and it leads ultimately to life. And he asks nothing more of mankind, than to seek their own happiness, to avoid their own misery and everlasting destruction; for it might easily be proved, that while there is no one who is not bound to serve his master, there is at the same time no virtue, no duty, independent of its ultimate issue, that is not its own present reward—no vice that is not its own torment. The man that offends against Christ, wrogeth his own soul, and they that hate him love death. It is preposterous to call himself a Christian, unless his life is a sacrifice of obedience to him—unless he yields compliance to the whole will of God. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is

not in him." An unchristian temper and disposition, an ungodly life and conversation, betray the profession he makes, and indicate evidently that Christ is not formed in his heart; and although a man would declare from morning to night that he loves and believes in Christ, and yet does not do those things that are enjoined, does not live soberly, righteously, and godly—does not exhibit a conversation becoming the Gospel. What does he do but give a practical demonstration of the hollowness of his profession, and of the falseness of his asseverations? An opposite doctrine would stand opposed to the whole will of God—would be making Christ the minister of sin, and an agent of hell—would reduce to a perfect nullity the holy law of God, and render that Being, in whose eyes the heavens are not clean, and who charges his angels with folly, alike indifferent to duty and sin. But they that are Christ's cannot sin; they cannot but yield soul and body and spirit to him; not merely from a sense of obligation to, and constraining love of, Christ, but from their being renewed in the spirit of their minds, and from the union they hold with Christ. Says the Apostle, "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God; in this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil." "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not;" not that the purity of every soul is complete—not that the obedience of the best is perfect—not that there is no departure from living to God; for in this life the struggle between the old and the new man must still be carried on; so long as the Christian is in the body, corruption still adheres to him; but that in his renewed nature sin is hateful to him, and obedience is as delightful as is the reverse to the unsanctified heart; that he will not sin wilfully, the law of God being written on his heart, and he will delight in the law of the Lord after the inner man; and it will be like his meat and his drink, to do the will of his Father in heaven. Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. Is it asked, to what extent is this conformity? It is just to the extent of the divine requirements and of the examples of Christ. O! then, let us remember whose we are, and whom we have bound ourselves to serve. We are not our own; we have nothing which we can call our own: our life, our

time, our property, our talents, are all Christ's. Let us be careful not to alienate the Lord's property—not to transfer what is Christ's unalienable right into the hands of another—not to devote what is designed for God's glory to a purpose for which it was never designed being put by Christ. And having bound ourselves to the Lord by an everlasting covenant, to follow him whithersoever he shall lead us, and to serve him all the days of our life, let us see that we redeem our pledge, and make good our engagement. But let no man deceive himself in this matter: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death." The ways of a man may be clean in his own eyes, but the Lord weigheth the spirit. Remember that it is not the form of godliness, but the power of godliness, you are required to possess—not leaves, but fruit. The Lord requires of every one that is his, a real surrender of every thing to Christ. It is this, and this only, that constitutes obedience. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law; and they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Therefore, my beloved brethren, "giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Faint not in your well-doing, faint not, neither be discouraged; for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not. Show that you are Christ's, and let the same mind be in you that was in him, and see that ye walk even as he walked.

Thus have I endeavoured to point out what is incumbent on us, in consequence of our relation to Christ. I ask you, then, severally, my friends, are you individually Christ's? This is a question which every man should be putting and daily putting to himself, and he should be concerned to determine on what grounds he is so. It is a question in which the everlasting well-being

of the soul is involved. Are we Christ's? If we are Christ's, then all things are ours. If we are not Christ's, what is it that we possess that is worth coveting or seeking after? Here there must be no generalizing. Every man must answer for himself individually in the sight of God. Many may say, Yes, I am Christ's, but on very slender grounds, having no connexion with, no interest in him. You have been baptized, perhaps you have named the name of Christ. And is this all? Are you Christ's on no higher grounds than these? This is a point on which you may certainly come to a conclusion, whether you are Christ's, whether you have been brought from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan and slavery unto God; whether you have experienced the inward abiding of the Holy Ghost, whether a surrendering of your souls, bodies, and spirits, has been made to Christ, whether you have committed all to him. You may judge also, from the effects produced, whether you are Christ's, from your humility, from your gratitude, and from your dependence and reliance on Christ, and the devotedness of your heart to God. Of these, some judgment may be formed by every one that will examine himself in the sight of God. Do this, saying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and whether I am of those given to Christ to be redeemed from wrath." If you are Christ's, you will be seeking surely the honour of your Saviour. Christ may say to you, If I am your Father, where is my honour; and if I am your Master, where is my fear? Know then, that it is your duty to speak well of Christ, and to study to advance his cause in the world. And if you are Christians, you will be anxious to circumscribe the limits of Satan's empire day by day; if you are Christians, you will be anxious to establish Christ's kingdom in the world. He could accomplish his own ends without subordinate agency, and without any instrumentality of ours; but he honours us, by intrusting us and committing, as it were, his cause into our hands, and giving us in charge what he gave in charge to Peter, "Feed my sheep; feed my lambs." O let us never forget that our lives are not conferred upon us, not continued with us, in order that we might live to ourselves, but unto the glory of our divine Master.

Surely a way in which we can honour the

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Redeemer, is to promote the cause of Christ in the education of a young and rising generation. You know it is my object to press upon you the interests of the Society, on whose account we have assembled this evening. I press the claims of the Society for your support; and when you learn from the communications read from the pulpit and from the press, what numbers are in the circumstances of those who are receiving instruction in this way, I trust they will excite your sympathy, and call forth your support. I know no way in which charity can be so advantageously bestowed, as in promoting and extending the education of the young. If the seed be not sown in early life, we are to expect afterwards nothing but thorns and thistles. If the earliest years of youth are not laid hold of for the improvement of the mind, it is neglected, and neglected for ever; for so soon as their time is devoted to labour, the young are withdrawn from the parental roof, to exert themselves in their own support, and it is this consideration that has given rise to our infant schools in different quarters of the city. From the earliest moments of life, the infant mind may be said thus to be trained to the knowledge of God and things divine. I may tell you that from three to four hundred are educated by this Society in Sabbath schools, in the most absolute and crowded corners of our city and suburbs. Those individuals who are now Sabbath school teachers, were themselves once Sabbath school scholars. The grace of God has been brought near to their souls; and having felt the value of divine instruction, they have gone forth, that they may impart freely to others what they themselves received. Besides those Sabbath school children, there are one hundred receiving instruction during the week. It will be understood that these teachers must be paid; and although those Sabbath school teachers give their instructions gratis, this cannot be always the case. I call then on all who take an interest in this subject, to aid those who have spent much means, and made great exertions for the youth who are perishing around them. A little would go a great way in extending drops of comfort to a benighted mind. Nay, even the poorest may be the means of rescuing some poor destitute little one from the slavery of sin, and bringing him to the situation of a free-born child of God. Many instances have been recorded of the benefit that has been received by the young, from attendance on these Sabbath school exercises; and the very circumstance I have stated, that several of the Sabbath school teachers were in circumstances such as these youths they are now training up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, is a great encouragement for them to persevere; and we ought, as we are Christians, to aid them in their labour of love. Shall you not then strengthen their hands? Christ cannot be profited by any of our services personally; but the poor, the ignorant, the benighted, those who are far from righteousness, the prodigal straying and wandering from his father's house, and those plunging themselves in everlasting destruction, we have always with us. And shall we not strive and try to be the means of rescuing these brands from everlasting burning? We should feel it our privilege, then, and our duty, to do what we can; and O let us remember that our day of working is soon coming to an end! We know, many of us at least, that the most benevolent have been recently, and at an hour they little thought of, unexpectedly cut off; and O! who can tell who may be the next victim of death—who shall be the next individual that the great king of terrors has selected as his own! O then, while it is the day of our merciful visitation, while we can do good to others, let us avail ourselves of our day and of our privilege, and let us do what we can, for the night is fast approaching, when no man can work. The Lord incline you to give to this institution liberally. Amen.

GOD IS LOVE;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL, GLASGOW, ON THE FORENOON

OF SABBATH 29th DECEMBER, 1833,

By the Rev. THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.

Professor of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh.

"God is love."—1 JOHN iv. 16.

DID we only believe the statement made in this text, did we but view God as love, this simple translation into another belief than we are prone to have naturally, would be the translation into another character; with the establishment of this new faith, there would instantly emerge a new heart and a new nature. Let us attend in the first place, to the original conception of humanity, placed and constituted as it now is in reference to this great and invisible Being; and you must all be sensible that it is not of God as a God of love, but of God—I will not say as a God of malignity—but of a God that has displeasure in his heart towards you. I believe this is the first and universal sense of nature as it now is; not such a view of God as can make you respond to him with confidence and grateful affection; but such as makes you regard him with distrust, jealousy and terror. In the second place, let us adduce the likeliest arguments, by which to overcome this conception, and to find lodgment in the human breast for another and opposite affection, in the achievement of which a very great change would take place in the human heart. In the third place, let us stop and contemplate the effect of such a change in the state of man's understanding as to God in the whole system of his life. I verily believe, if such a change be accomplished, it is quite sufficient to make you new creatures; that if you can only succeed in dislodging from your minds the apprehension that God looks on you with displeasure, and in place of it put into your minds the confidence that God is love, such a change of your apprehensions in respect of God, would produce a change in your whole system of feelings and conduct.

Now then, in regard to the first general head, in which we propose to consider the apprehension of nature in regard to God, as of a Being that looks on you with a stern displeasure, and whom you cannot therefore regard without distrust; there are two reasons why we conceive God to be so actuated towards us, as not to inspire us with terror, or at least with distrust; instead of conceiving him to be actuated by

that love the text ascribes to him, and which, as soon as believed by us, would set us at ease, and inspire us with confidence. The first reason why we view God with this terror and distrust, may be shortly stated thus. It is a kind of general law in human nature, that whenever we are placed within reach of any being of imagined power, but withal, of unknown purpose, that being becomes the object of our terror and dismay. It is not necessary that we should be positively assured of his determination in respect of us: it is enough to produce alarm, if we know that he has strength sufficient for the execution of his displeasure. Uncertainty alone will beget terror; and the fancies of mere ignorance, in regard to such a being, are ever found to be accompanied with alarm. It is thus that a certain recoil of dread and aversion would be felt in the presence of a strange animal, whatever the gentleness of its nature may be, if simply its nature were unknown. Hence, too, the fear of a child for strangers, who must first make demonstration of their love, by their gifts and caresses, ere they can woo it into confidence. Hence also the consternation of savages, on the first approach of a mighty vessel to their shores; more especially, if in smoke and thunder, and feats of marvellous exhibition, it has given the evidence of its power. It may be a voyage of deliverance, but this they as yet know not; they only behold the power—and power beheld suddenly is tremendous. Many are the fruitless demonstrations and signals of good will ere they can dislodge themselves of their distrust, or recal themselves into free or fearless intercourse from the woods or lurking-places, to which they have fled for safety. Such then is the universal bias of nature, when the power is known, and the purpose is unknown; men give way to visions of terror, to the dark misgivings of a troubled imagination. The quick and instant suggestion upon all these occasions, is that of fear; and the difficulty—and an exceeding difficulty it is—to work against this tendency of the heart, so as to reassure it into confidence. Now this may prepare

you for understanding what I would call the first reason why we view God with such terror and distrust. Apply the terror so remarkable in the case of savages when an unknown vessel of tremendous power is seen, and they do not know the purpose of its approach, to that terror and distrust wherewith God is viewed. If such be the effect on the human feelings of a power that is known, associated with a purpose that is unknown, we are not to wonder that the great and invisible God is invested to our eyes with imagery of terror. It is because he is great, and at the same time invisible, that we so invest him. It is precisely because the Being who has all the energies of nature at command, is at the same time shrouded in mystery impenetrable, that we view him as tremendous. All regarding him is inscrutable; the depths of his past eternity, the mighty and unknown extent of his creation, the secret policy or end of his government—a government that embraces an infinity of worlds, and reaches forward to an infinity of ages; all these leave a being so circumscribed in his faculties as man, so limited in his duration, and therefore so limited in his experience, in profoundest ignorance of God; and then the inaccessible retirement in which this God hides himself from the observation of his creatures here below, the clouds and darkness which are about the pavilion of his throne, the utter inability of the powers of man to reach beyond the confines of that pavilion, render vain all attempts to fathom the essence of God, or to obtain any distinct personality of his person or being, which have been shrouded in the deep silence of many centuries, insomuch that nature, whatever it may tell of his existence, places between our senses and this mighty Cause, a veil of intercession. There is an untrodden interval, between the spirituality of the Godhead on the one hand, and all that the eye of man can see or the ear of man can hear; and there is a barrier which all his powers of curious and searching conception cannot cross, and across which, God at least for many ages, has sent forth no direct or visible manifestation of his own person or character; and so whatever the character or the manifested kindness may have been in those primeval days, when God walked with man in the bower of his earthly paradise, and among the smiling abodes of his innocence; certain it is that now an exile from the divine

presence, all this confidence has fled. Now that the Divinity has withdrawn from mortal view, man trembles at the thought of him, and the dread imagination, whether of a present wrath or coming vengeance, is the only homage which nature offers to an unknown God. And is it not natural in these circumstances that we should stir ourselves up to get hold of him—that we should seek after God if happily we may find him. But there is nothing in the varying aspect of creation, or in the varying fortunes of human life, which can at all alleviate our perplexity in regard to the final designs or character of God; for on the one hand the smiles and sunshine, and the softer beauties of the landscape, which seem to picture forth the mild attributes of Deity, are alternated by the other and opposite features—the sweeping flood, and the angry tempest, and that dread thunder of the skies, wherewith the mysterious Being who rules in the firmament above, overawes the world; and thus, while in the one case we have the mutual affection and unnumbered sweets of many a cottage, which might serve to manifest the indulgent kindness of him who is the universal parent of the human family; we have on the other hand the cares, the heart-burnings, the moral discomforts, often the pining sickness, or the cold and cheerless poverty, or, more palpably, the fierce contests and mutual distractions even among civilized men; and lastly, and to consummate all, the death—the unshaken and relentless death with which generation after generation, whether among the abodes of the prosperous and the happy, or among the dwellings of the adverse and unfortunate, after a few years are visited laying all the vanities of human fortune in the dust; these all bespeak, if not a malignant, at least an offended Deity. It is in the midst of such contradictory appearances that the regimen of the divine ministration becomes a profound, a hopeless enigma, at once to exercise and baffle all spirits; and the unapproachable Being who presides over all, is the object of our dread, because of his concealment. Obscurity is terrible because it is unknown.

I would proceed to the second reason, why we view God with distrust and alarm; but instead of this I should like, in the first place, though it anticipates the second head of discourse, to bring alongside as it were of the way in which we view God as an object of terror, the Christian argument

why we should view God as a Being of goodness, I would only state two reasons: Nature's conception of God, is such as to inspire us with terror; and ere I proceed to the consideration of the second reason, I feel, I say, strongly inclined, though I should anticipate the second head of discourse, to state, and, in as far as we are able, to enforce, the appropriate, the counterpart arguments by which this first reason, for thinking hardly and adversely of God, may be met and ought to be overcome. The argument then which we are in quest of is not to be found in the whole range, in the whole compass of visible nature. It is only to be found in one of the doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ: a certain distrust and a certain terror will still continue to haunt and disquiet us, so long as any ambiguity continues to rest on the character of God. But there is such an ambiguity and which no observation of nature, or no experience of human life can dissipate. Whatever the falsely or superstitiously fearful imagination conjures up, because of God being at a distance, can only be dispelled by God brought nigh unto us; the spiritual must become sensible: the veil which hides the unseen God from the eye of mortals, must be somehow withdrawn. Now all this has been done, and done only in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ; He "being the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." The Godhead, then, became palpable to human senses, and man could behold as in a picture, and in distinct personification, the very characteristics of the Being who made him. Then truly did men hold converse with Emmanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us. They saw his glory in the face of Jesus Christ; and the Deity himself may be said to have been placed in authentic representation before them, when God manifest in the flesh, descended on Judea, and sojourned among its earthly tabernacles. By this mysterious movement from heaven to earth, the dark, the untrdden interval which separates the corporeal from the spiritual, was at length overcome; the King eternal and invisible was then placed within the ken of mortals; they saw the Son, and in Him they saw the Father also; so that, while contemplating the person and history of a man, they could make a study of the Godhead. We come then, I say, to this most remarkable manifestation, the manifestation of God in human form. The incarn-

nation of Jesus Christ makes the Godhead as it were visible to us, and we can make a study of the character of God by reading the history and doings of Jesus Christ in the world. What a mighty thing it is that we should thus become acquainted with God, by becoming acquainted with Him who may be said to be his visible representative on earth! Well; how far does such a manifestation go to correct our apprehension of God, as a God of frowning displeasure? It is through the intervention of Christ as God manifest in the flesh, that unequivocal demonstration has been given that God is love. We could not scale the height of that mysterious ascent which brings us within view of the Godhead. It is by the descent of the Godhead unto us, that this manifestation has been made; and we learn and know it from the wondrous history of Him who went about doing good continually. We could not go in search of the viewless Deity, through the depths and the vastnesses of infinity, or divine the secret, the untold purposes that were brooding there. But in what way could more palpable exhibition have been made, than when the eternal Son enshrined in humanity, stepped forth on the platform of visible things, and there proclaimed the Deity? We can now reach the character of God in the human looks, in the human language of Him who is the very image and visible representative of Deity; we see it in the tears of sympathy which he shed; we hear it in the accents of tenderness which fell from him. Even his very remonstrances were those of a deep and gentle nature; for they are remonstrances of deepest pathos—the complaints of a longing spirit against the sad perversity of men bent on their own. When we think that God looks adversely at us, let us think of Him who had compassion on a famishing multitude—of Him who, when he approached the city of Jerusalem, wept over it as he thought of its coming destruction; and, knowing that the Son is like the Father, let us reassure our hopes with certainty that God is love.

I do not think that such stress is laid in the minds of many Christians as should be, on this doctrine, that God sent his own Son into the world manifest in the flesh. Let us dwell therefore, for one moment on the mighty importance of this doctrine, in filling up that mysterious interval which lies between every corporeal being, and the God who is a Spirit and invisible. No man

hath seen God at any time—and the power which is unseen is terrible. Fancy trembles before its own picture, and superstition throws its darkest image over it. The voice of thunder is awful, but not so awful, as the conception of that angry Being who sits in mysterious concealment. This gives it all its energy. In this sketch of the imagination, fear is sure to predominate. We gather our conceptions of nature's God from those scenes where nature threatens. We speak not of the theology of the schools, and the empty parade of its instructions; we speak of the theology of actual beings—that theology which is sure to derive its sensations from the character from whence the human heart derives its sensations; and we can refer to your own feelings and the history of this world's opinions, if God, is more felt to your imaginations in the peacefulness of a scene, or in the liveliness of a summer landscape, than when winter with its mighty elements, strips the forest of its leaves, and man flies to cover himself from the desolation that spreads over the surface of the world. If nature and her elements be dreadful, how much greater that mysterious and unseen Being who sits behind the elements, and gives birth and movement to all things! It is the mystery in which he is found, it is the inexplicable manner of his being far removed from the presence of the senses, it is its total unlikeness to all that nature can furnish to the eye of the body, or to the conception of the mind which animates the body; it is all this which throws the Being who formed us at a distance so inaccessible, and that has cast an impenetrable mantle over his ways. Now Jesus Christ has lifted up this mysterious veil, or rather has entered within it. He is now at the right hand of God, in the brightness of his Father's glory, in the express image of his person; he appeared to us in the palpable character of a man, and those high attributes, truth, justice, and mercy, which could not be felt or understood as they existed in the abstract and invisible Deity, are brought down to our conception in a manner the most familiar and impressive, by having been made through Jesus Christ to flow forth in human utterance, and to beam in the expressive physiognomy of a human countenance. Previous to this manifestation, as long as I had nothing before me but the unseen Spirit of God, my mind wandered in uncertainty, my busy

fancy was free to expatiate, and its images fill my heart with disquietude and terror; but in the life and person, and history of Jesus Christ, the attributes of the Divinity are brought down to the observation of the senses, and I can no longer mistake them: when, in the Son who is the express image of his Father, I see them carried home to my understanding by the evidence and the expression of human organs—when I see the kindness of the Father, in the tears which fell from the Son at the tomb of Lazarus—when I see his justice blended with his mercy in the exclamation, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, by Jesus Christ uttered with a tone more tender than human sympathy or human bosom ever uttered—I feel the judgment of God himself flashing conviction on my conscience, and calling me to repent while his wrath is suspended, and he still waiteth to be gracious. And it was not a temporary character our Saviour assumed: the human countenance, and the expression which made it so expressive to us remained with him to his latest hour; they survived his resurrection, and he took them with him to that mysterious place, which he now occupies. This we learn from his parting words to his mother; we see it in his unaltered form when he rose from the dead; we see it in his tenderness over the scruples of the unbelieving Thomas, convincing him that his body still retained the impression of the nails; we see it in his mind retaining sympathy for us worms, in characters as endearing as when he was on earth. We have an High Priest who is touched with a fellow-feeling of our infirmities. My soul, unable to support itself in its aerial flight among the regions of the invisible world, finds in Christ the figure, the countenance, the sympathies of a man. He has entered within that veil which hangs over the glories of the Eternal; and the mysterious, inaccessible throne of God is divested of all its terrors, when I think that a friend who bears my form and aspect, and knew its infirmities is there.

I cannot refrain from stating another consideration, that we may be no less sure that God is love, than that love is the characteristic of all good men. As Christ was the incarnation of the Deity, so every Christian may be regarded as an incarnation of the divine character; and he is formed after the image of God. Try then, my brethren, to recollect the countenance of him of whom you have the surest pledge

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that if now alive, he is a Christian indeed; or, if dead, he is now in heaven. I am sure if any who now hears me, lives within the confines of a district in this parish, now bereft of its guide and guardian, he can be at no loss to recollect one who did spend and was spent among them, and is now gone to his everlasting rest—one of the brightest and most exalted specimens of christian worth that ever adorned the visible church on earth; and though he left not the world under the weight of an extreme old age, though he attained not what the Psalmist calls the sum of human life threescore years and ten, yet did he live to the enjoyment of many years. A good man is like unto God, and many are the families who can attest how bright and visible was that love which our text has singled out as the great characteristic of God. The truth is, that he lost his own family; and his heart, desolated of the nearest and dearest of its earthly friends, gave and found relief in that large family, among whom, day after day, in the midst of a populous parish, he expatiated with all fervour, and benevolence, and piety. And all can attest how well he acquitted himself as a christian friend and father in the midst of them—how they rejoiced with him while he lived—and how all, from the oldest to the youngest, were saddened at his death. God grant this great breach be speedily repaired among us; and may both elders and people take a fresh lesson from him, who though now “dead yet speaketh.”

We now proceed to another reason, why instead of viewing God as love, we apprehend him to be a God of severity, and regard him with distrust. It is distinct from the former reason. It is not like the former, a fearful imagination, a mere product of uncertainty, or resulting from superstitiously dark and terrific imagination, when employed in interpreting what is vast, and at the same time unknown. It has a firmer basis to rest upon; not being conjured up by fancy, but drawn from the intimations of conscience, and suggested by one of the surest facts or findings in the history of man's moral nature. In the constitution of humanity there is a law of right and wrong in every heart, and which the possessor of that heart knows himself to have habitually by him. We have all consciences in us, that tell us of right and wrong, and we have all sufficient consciousness in our hearts to know, that that law of right and wrong is

what we have habitually violated. Now this is distinct from fear. This brings us to a more certain reason why we should view God with distrust; for along with the law of right and wrong in our own minds, along with the felt certainty of such a law, there is the resistless apprehension of a lawgiver—of a God offended by the disobedience of his creatures—of a judge, and judgment that awaits us—of a governor and king in heaven; between him and ourselves there is a yet unsettled controversy; and because of which we are disquieted with fear—a thought of reckoning and vengeance that are to come. We cannot view God as love, at the very time that conscience so powerfully tells us to view him as our enemy. Even though the lessors of nature and Christianity should conspire to inform us that love is a characteristic of Divinity, we cannot feel the practical influence of such a contemplation, so long as we are sensible of his special and merited displeasure; and his truth and justice, and other attributes seem to require that this displeasure shall be executed. Haunted by the misgivings of a guilty nature, which tells us of our own danger and insecurity, we could no more delight ourselves in the general benevolence of God, than we could luxuriate ourselves among the beauties which far and wide range around the mountain's base, if a bursting volcano surrounded our heads. Even though reason were to give us calm and philosophical conviction, the agitation of terror grounded on the consciousness of our self-deserving, would disturb such conviction, or displace it altogether. This, as I have said, is not a mere alarm as the former, but has both a distinct object and cause; and, instead of an airy imagination, is grounded on the universal sense we naturally have of our own actual state. We are conscious we have violated that law of right and wrong, and we are haunted with the imagination, and a very just one it is, that that law will be executed. We cannot but view ourselves as defaulters of that law, and hence a very distinct ground of terror and apprehension that God instead of looking at us with love, is looking at us with displeasure.

This apprehension is not more general than it is strong. I am aware that the strength of the apprehension is not at all applicable to those who live as they list, and never think of God. It were a great matter if we could stir up the apprehension in them, if we could make the law

a schoolmaster to them, and reduce them to anxiety, and make them ask, What shall we do to be saved? The doctrines of the gospel are thrown away upon them; but in reference to those who have been visited with any earnestness of conviction, or any earnestness of feeling on the subject, the apprehension is not more general than it is strong, and not to be overcome by any eloquent or sentimental representation of Deity. There is a meagre theology that would fain resolve the character of God into one attribute of kindness; but there is a theology of conscience that maintains its ascendancy, and gives its frown against this vain imagination. To Him who is seated on the throne of the universe, we, in spite of ourselves, ascribe the virtues of the Sovereign, as well as the virtues of the Parent; and however much it might have suited our convenience and wishes that we could at all times have taken refuge in the general benevolence of God, there are certain immutabilities of truth and nature that cannot be thus disposed of; for, attempt as we will, we cannot think of a law without a lawgiver, of a lawgiver without authority, of government without sanctions, and of a sentence without effect; we cannot have the thought of guilt without the dread of the execution of its proclaimed and threatened penalty; and thus the ever-meddling conscience within, as irrepressible as importunate, keeps man in perpetual fear of God, and tells him with authority, that it is a well-grounded fear. We cannot rid from our apprehension and correspondence a strict and accredited and awful correspondence, which enters into the relation between heaven and earth, and the orders of which cannot be let down without despoiling the sanctuary of God of all that is great and venerable. We cannot think of God with confidence or hope, while we think of ourselves as delinquents at the bar of that august tribunal, where he sitteth in judgment over us. We cannot even see him to be love through the troubled medium of remorse and fear, and far less rejoice or take comfort in it as a love directed to ourselves.

We all know that we are sinners; and we cannot look on God as love to us, so long as that imagination affects us. How shall we rid the human heart of that imagination, and what is the precise counteraction by which we can get at the secret, why the mind views God as an object of fear? Now, as in counteraction to our first reason, for viewing God with distrust, we adduced one

peculiar doctrine of Christianity; so in counteraction to our second reason, we now adduce another peculiar doctrine of Christianity, and that by far the noblest and most precious of its articles. The one was the doctrine of the Incarnation, the other is the doctrine of the Atonement. "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent his Son into the world to be the propitiation for our sins." By the former, the doctrine of the Incarnation, a conquest has been made over the imaginations of the ignorant; by the latter, a conquest has been made, not over the imagination, but over the solid and well-grounded fear of guilt. By the one, we are told of Deity embodied, and thus the love of God is made the subject as it were of actual demonstration. By the other, we are told of the Deity propitiated, and thus the love of God has been made to shine forth in the midst of the law's sustained and vindicated honours. It is this junction of mercy with truth, of mercy with righteousness—it is this harmony of all the divine attributes in the scheme of reconciliation—it is this skilful congruity established in the Gospel between the salvation of the sinner and the authority of the Sovereign, which so adapts the evangelical economy to all the wants and exigencies of our fallen nature. Naked proclamations of mercy would never have set the conscience at rest—would never have permanently hushed those perpetual misgivings whereby with the heart of the sinner is haunted—who, by the very constitution of his moral nature, when he thinks of God, must tremble before him, as a God of justice; nor can peace be firmly restored to the sinner's distempered bosom—that which hindereth must be taken out of the way; and it has been taken out of the way, for now it is nailed to the cross of Christ. In this glorious spectacle we see the mystery revealed, and the compassion of the parent meeting in fullest harmony with the now asserted, now vindicated, prerogative of the lawgiver—we there behold justice and mercy made prominent. The Gospel is a halo of all the attributes of God, and yet the pre-eminent manifestation there is of God as love, which will shed its lustre amid all the perfections of the divine nature. And here it should be especially remarked, that the atonement was made for the sins of the whole world; God's direct and primary object being to vindicate the truth and justice of the Godhead. Instead of taking from his love, it only gave it more emphatic

demonstration ; for instead of love, simple, and bending itself without difficulty to the happiness of its objects, it was a love which, ere it could reach the guilty being it groaned after, had to force the barriers of a necessity, which, to all human appearance, was insuperable. The law—the mountain of these iniquities that separated us from God—the high and holy characteristics of that Being who is unchangeable stood in its way ; and the mystery which angels desired to look into was, how the Eternal who sits on heaven's throne could at once be a just God, and the Saviour. The love of God, with such an obstacle, and trying to get over it, is a higher exhibition than all the love which radiates from his throne on all the sinless angels. For the achievement of this mighty deliverance, not only had the Captain of Salvation to travel in the greatness of his strength, but to sustain a dreadful endurance. The deliverance of man was wrought out in the midst of agonies and groans, in all the bitterness of a sore humiliation. He was bruised for our iniquities, on him the chastisement of our peace was laid, and in being so, he had to bear the awful

burden of a world's expiation. The affirmation that God is love, is strengthened by that other, to him who owns the authority of Scripture, that God *so* loved the world—I call on you to mark the emphatic *so*—as to give his only begotten Son. He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, or that expression, "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to be a propitiation for our sins." There is a moral, a depth, an intensity of meaning, a richness of sentiment, that Paul calls unsearchable, in the cross of Christ, that tells emphatically that God is righteousness, and that God is love.

There is a third head of discourse under which I am anxious to demonstrate to you that it is not a love just shed and spread over the world generally. A number of us are very apt to read the Bible generally, as if it did not bear any distinct reference to ourselves. We will admit the love of God towards the world ; but what is there in the gospel to convince that God specifically and distinctly holds out his love to each of us ? The consideration of this we reserve till another opportunity.

THE PARABLE OF DIVES AND LAZARUS ;

A CHARITY SERMON, PREACHED ON THE EVENING OF SUNDAY, 22nd DECEMBER, 1833, IN
THE CHAPEL OF EASE, HOPE STREET, IN BEHALF OF THE GLASGOW SOCIETY
FOR THE RELIEF OF INDIGENT FEMALES,

By the Rev. ROBERT BUCHANAN,

Minister of the Tron Church, Glasgow.

"But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art d."—LUKE xvi. 25.

In the parable to which these words belong, we are presented with a double contrast between the state of two individuals ; first in this life, and afterwards in the life that is to come. The one side of the picture exhibits to our view a rich man clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously in his palace, with a poor man full of sores lying in neglected wretchedness at his gate. By the men of the world in general, these two individuals would be regarded as representing the opposite extremes of happiness and misery ; poverty and disease being by them commonly regarded as the chief evils incident to human life, and health and wealth

as its chief good. On the other side of the picture, however, we find the relative position of its two principal figures inversely and strangely altered. Here we behold the poor man delivered from all his sorrows, reposing in the bosom of Abraham, amid the joys and the glories of heaven ; while the rich man, stript of all his earthly honours and dignity, is seen addressing him in agony in the place of woe. Vivid as was the contrast in the former case, in the latter even worldly men will allow it to be unspeakably more striking and impressive ; nor will even they hesitate to confess, that the short-lived splendour of the rich man's temporal state was

dearly purchased at the expense of dwelling with everlasting burnings, or to avow that the temporal distresses of the poor man were at all to be compared with the glory by which they had been followed. But, surely, we are not to understand either that worldly prosperity should be invariably and necessarily followed by eternal misery, or that eternal felicity is to be the inevitable consequence of temporal affliction. That very Abraham, in whose bosom Lazarus is represented as reclining in heaven, was rich and prosperous while on earth, beyond most men of his time. It could not, therefore, have been the mere wealth of the rich man which excluded him from that blessed abode, any more than it could have been the poverty and disease endured by Lazarus that procured his admission into it. What, then, is the connexion between the two sides of this striking picture? The key which at once unlocks its meaning, and unfolds the lesson which it is designed to convey, is furnished, I apprehend, by the verse which has been selected for our text: "Son," said Abraham, "remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." In order, however, that these words may serve the purpose for which they are recorded, to unfold the meaning of the parable, it will be necessary, in the first place, to consider the import of the statement thus made, that the rich man had received his good things in his lifetime, and likewise Lazarus evil things. In the second place, it will be necessary to point out the principle, according to which, torment succeeded the good things in the one case, and comfort succeeded the evil things in the other. Having done this, we shall be in a condition, in conclusion, to attend to one or two of those lessons which the subject is fitted to teach us.

In the first place, then, we propose to consider the import of the statement made in the first clause of the text, that the rich man had received his good things in his lifetime, and likewise Lazarus evil things. Are we to understand this statement as intimating that there is a certain proportion of good and evil allotted to each individual by some arbitrary decree of the great Sovereign of the universe; and that where the good has been bestowed during the term of our earthly existence, the evil should, as matter of course, be anticipated in the life that is to come? To put such an interpretation upon the words, were to make caprice the distinguishing characteristic of that God of whom it is testified, that justice and judgment are the habitations of his throne; yea, that righteousness goeth continually before his face. Worldly prosperity is a good which many men may enjoy independently even of their own choice. It may have been their birth-right, of which they had come into the possession, before they were in circumstances either to ~~form~~ wish, or to put forth an effort for its attainment; or it may have been acquired as the result of honest and persevering industry and intelligence, where no undue preference was given to it over any other more important blessing. Worldly adversity, on the other hand, in the form either of poverty or disease, is an evil which no one would choose for its own sake; but which, on the contrary, all men, were it in their power, would studiously avoid. To make then, on the one hand, the mere bestowment of a temporal good a reason for the subsequent bestowment of eternal misery; or, on the other hand, to make the mere infliction of an earthly evil a reason for the conferring of an eternal blessing; were to destroy the very foundation of the moral government of the world.

(To be concluded in our next.)

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THE
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SATURDAY, 1ST FEBRUARY, 1834.

No. 97.

SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT BUCHANAN, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. ALEXANDER HERVEY, Calton.

Price 2d.

THE PARABLE OF DIVES AND LAZARUS;

A Sermon preached by the Rev. ROBERT BUCHANAN.—Concluded.

BUT we are not left to demonstrate the falsity of such interpretation of the statement before us, by a reference to the immutable principles of moral rectitude in the character and administration of God, which such an interpretation would so obviously contradict. There is in the statement itself a single word, by attending to the force of which the real peculiarity of the rich man's case may at once be perceived, and the meaning of the statement satisfactorily explained. It is the word *thy*. Remember that thou in *thy* lifetime receivedst *thy* good things—the things on which thy heart was supremely set—the things which were esteemed by thee to be preferable to all else. Besides, as a son of Abraham the rich man had belonged to that chosen people to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the services of God, and the promises; he could not pretend, therefore, that he had no opportunity of becoming acquainted with any better portion than that he had chosen. Moses and the prophets had set before him, on the infallible authority of inspiration, a clear discovery of his state and character as a guilty creature, lying under the condemnation of God; while, at the same time, they had also taught him, on the same infallible ground, that there was still mercy with God, that he might be feared; and plenteous redemption, that he might be sought unto. By offering to that God the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite spirit, humbled under a sense of sin—by trusting in his covenant-mercy—by ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well, he had an infallible assurance

that that God would make with him an everlasting covenant, and would give him the sure mercies of David; while, at the same time, Moses and the prophets had declared, that if he rejected the counsel of that divine wisdom, and would have none of its reproof, that God also would laugh at his calamity, and mock when his fear should come. Instead, however, of giving heed to those things which belonged unto the peace of his soul, and choosing as his portion the favour of God, which is life, and his loving-kindness, which is better than life, he had set his affections wholly on the things of this world, and he had obtained his desire; and now that, after having lived on the earth in pleasure and in wantonness, he had been summoned to leave behind him his riches corrupted, and his garments moth-eaten, it was too late to complain of the consequences of his own deliberate choice. The good things he had chosen, and had preferred to the spiritual portion set before him in the law and the prophets, were things which, from their very nature, could not follow him into that spiritual world into which he had been summoned to enter. Therefore, said Abraham, “Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things;” and therefore said he also that “ Lazarus had received evil things.” It is not said *his* evil things, but simply evil things. It is not intimated, therefore, that they were his choice, but it is plain that he did not complain of them. Moses and the prophets, whom the rich man disregarded, had taught Lazarus to take a just view of his condition and of his destiny, and therefore he despised not the chastening of the Lord, nor fainted when

rebuked of him. On account of sin, he well knew he more than deserved all the sufferings he was called to endure ; and, now that he also had passed through this state of probation, he was translated into that more exalted state of existence, for which the evil things sent him had served as correctives to prepare him.

The view thus given, then, of the import of the statement contained in the first clause of the text, may serve to guide us to a right understanding of what we propose next to consider—namely, the principle according to which, under the administration of a holy and righteous God, comfort succeeded the evil things in the one case, and torment succeeded the good things in the other. In order rightly to understand the principle according to which, under the righteous government of God, the rich man was at his death consigned to a place of torment, we must not confine our attention to the simple fact already noticed—namely, that he had chosen wealth and worldly distinction as his good things ; for though it be unquestionably true that the favour of God is infinitely preferable to any temporal good, and that to prefer any created object to the great Creator himself, is a sin deserving of his righteous condemnation ; it is, at the same time, by the use made of the object thus preferred, that the sinfulness of the choice is to us demonstrated. The parable, indeed, enters not into any minute detail of the rich man's life ; while, at the same time, it is evident, from its whole form and structure, that it is designed to convey to us the idea of a man who employed his wealth merely as the ministers to his own pride, and vanity, and self-indulgence. “ He was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.” No cost was spared where his own selfish gratifications were to be indulged ; for his wealth he gave no thanks to God, nor acknowledged his responsibility to God for the method in which it was employed. He regarded it as his own acquisition, the product of his own wisdom and prudence, and, as such, held himself entitled to devote it to the purchase of those sinful enjoyments for which he lived, without regard to the glory of God, or to the good of men. The sphere which had been assigned him in the world, was one of authority and influence. His numerous dependents, whose conduct he had it in his power to regulate ; the neighbourhood, which would be ready to take its tone from his influential example ;

the poor and the needy whom his bounty might relieve—all presented an extensive and important field on which, as an intelligent, a moral, and a responsible creature, he was bound to employ his riches for good. Conceive then, my friends, those numerous dependents in his luxurious and wasteful household, habituated to every thing like neglecting the honour or worship of God, and pampered into pride and self-indulgence by the spectacle constantly displayed before their eyes ; conceive that neighbourhood corrupted by his ungodly example, taught, with all the force which, from his high situation, that example would receive, neither to fear God, nor regard man ; conceive the widow and the fatherless lying like Lazarus in neglected wretchedness around him, while he was wasting every day in riotous living, what would far more than have sufficed to diffuse comfort and gladness through all their desolate dwellings ; conceive all this, and then say, if it was not upon the righteous principle, that what a man soweth that shall he also reap, that he who has so possessed his good things in time, was condemned to receive his evil things in eternity. Upon the same principle too it was, that the poor man was comforted, while the rich man was tormented. In his case also, it was not simply by the condition that had been assigned him, but it was by the improvement made of the circumstance in which he was placed, that the righteousness of that principle of the divine government is demonstrated, according to which he was at his death carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. That God, whose prerogative it is to assign to every creature the situation that seemeth good in his sight, had appointed Lazarus to serve and to glorify him amidst the privations of poverty, and the sufferings of bodily disease. Recognising in this appointment the wisdom, as well as the sovereignty, of Him who doth all things well, he humbled himself under that mighty hand, by which he had a sure word of promise, that in due time he should be lifted up. The parable enters not into any minute detail of the life of Lazarus, any more than it does into that of the rich man, with whom it contrasts him ; while, at the same time, it may be confidently affirmed, that no one can candidly and attentively consider the parable, without perceiving that the picture of Lazarus, though sketched as it were with only a few rapid and masterly touches, is designed to set before us an ex-

ample of patient acquiescence in the divine will, of meek resignation under severe and complicated suffering, and of unshaken confidence in the rectitude and faithfulness of that God, by whose visitation he was chastened. As a creature, he acknowledged and revered the sovereignty of God; as a sinner, he humbled himself meekly under the stroke of affliction; as a faithful son of faithful Abraham, he trusted in the covenant mercies of that God who afflicteth not willingly, nor grieveth the children of men. He had not *chosen* these evil things as his portion, but he felt that God was exacting far less than his iniquities deserved, even when these afflictions were laid upon him. He had not sought, on the other hand, his portion among the things of this world, and therefore he was not disappointed, because they were withheld. He had, indeed, sowed unto the Spirit, and of the Spirit had reaped life everlasting. He had received the chastening of the Lord, as God designed it to be received as a means of turning his heart more closely and heartily to himself—as a means of preparing him for that higher and holier state, to which in due time he was transferred.

Having thus, then, endeavoured shortly to explain the import of the statement contained in the text, and to point out the principle according to which, under the righteous government of God, the rich man who had possessed his good things in time, was condemned to receive his evil things in eternity, and the principle upon which the poor man, who had meekly borne evil things and profited under them, was also appointed to receive good things in eternity; it now remains, in conclusion, to attend to one or two of those lessons which the consideration of the subject is fitted to teach us. And the first of these lessons is, that we are not to estimate the place which men occupy in the favour of God, according to the amount of their temporal prosperity. It is an indubitable fact, that worldly prosperity, or, in other words, the acquisition of wealth, is a thing to which men are inclined to attach an undue measure of importance. In saying this, it is not at all intended to signify that there is any thing necessarily wrong or sinful in seeking, by fair or honourable means, to increase our portion of the good things of this world. The comforts and advantages which wealth enables its possessor to secure, are unquestionably desirable in themselves, and may not only be

used without interfering with the discharge of any christian duty, but put their possessor in the way of undertaking additional duties, and of becoming more extensively useful and serviceable to the generation in which he lives. At the same time, however, it is unquestionable that wealth is a talent, which it is a difficult attainment rightly to cultivate and exercise. The honour and distinction which, in this selfish world, riches commonly bring to their possessor, have a tendency to foster the pride of the human heart. The temporal enjoyments which they place within his reach, and with which they constantly surround him, exert too often a corrupting influence over the mind, fostering as they do his appetite for temporal pleasures, and very often deadening, in the same degree, his desire after spiritual and divine things. It was, from a knowledge of this corrupting tendency of riches over the heart and mind of man, that our Saviour said, “It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” And how unwisely, then, my brethren, do men often envy the temporal prosperity of those around them. In permitting the wicked to prosper for a season on his way, to add as it were house to house, and field to field, it may be, and doubtless too often is, in his divine displeasure that God thus gives him the extent of his desire. God, my friends, we have reason even from this very parable to believe, is often suffering men to curse themselves, by granting them in abundance the object on which they have set their hearts—suffering them, by the accumulation of their chosen treasures, to heap up as it were obstacles in their own way, evidently to shut them out from the kingdom of God; for such are the waywardness and the worldliness of our hearts and minds, that afflictions and trials of various kinds are absolutely necessary as a moral discipline for our souls. And, accordingly, the disappointments which men are often called to encounter, when their schemes of worldly aggrandizement are suddenly and unexpectedly blasted, the trials that Lazarus had to suffer, in having to struggle through a whole life with poverty and bodily disease—these, however grievous to flesh and blood, may be, and often are, the first and tenderest tokens of our Father’s heavenly care; designed to convince us of the inaccuracy of all earthly possessions; designed to make us more in earnest about obtain-

ing the one thing needful, by laying up treasure in heaven; yea, designed to glorify himself, by exhibiting the strength of his own arm, and the power of his own consolations, even in the meek and patient and cheerful spirit of the sufferer himself. And, my friends, when we think, as this parable calls on us to do, of a poor Lazarus languishing in hopeless disease, and bereaved of every earthly comfort, a spectacle to excite the loathing of the selfish sentimental, to be passed by with unfeeling indifference by the lordly sons of fortune, or to call forth at the utmost a transitory emotion of pity from the unthinking multitudes, as they check for an instant their giddy career in the pursuits of vanity, to gaze on the spectacle of human wretchedness; when we think of this poor and wretched creature, this seemingly forlorn and deserted child of misery, as being nevertheless a child of God, and the heir of a crown of glory, unfading in the heavens; is it not fitted to make all earthly pleasures and all earthly honours dwindle into insignificance? is it not fitted to rob the splendour of unsanctified wealth of all its deceitful lustre, and to make the pleasures which the men of this world esteem the highest, to be tasteless and insipid in our view?

The only other lesson to which I would at present advert, as deducible from the subject before us, is one which it is of great importance that we should lay to heart. It is, my friends, that it is, or ought to be, our great concern to improve the talents which have been committed to us, whatever they may be, so that at the coming of our Lord we may all of us be prepared to give in our account with joy. Whatever may be the situation which God in his wise and adorable providence has assigned us, that situation has its own peculiar duties, which it ought to be our anxious concern clearly to understand, and which it ought to be our constant study and aim faithfully to perform. If, my brethren, it has pleased God to assign it to any of those now present to serve him in a humble situation, let them learn, after the example of Lazarus, whose suffering has been now set before you, meekly and patiently to resign themselves unto the will of God; let them learn meekly to bear whatever afflictions or trials it may please him to appoint; and let them be assured, by the case of Lazarus, that the God who hath appointed these trials, afflicteth none of his people willingly, nor grieveth the

children of men; and that he is designing by these trials, of whatever kind they may be, to provide for you, and more certainly to secure, as your ultimate inheritance, those good things in eternity, which Lazarus at length was blessed to enjoy. If, on the other hand, it hath pleased the same God to assign it to others, to serve and glorify Him in a higher station of society, blessed with greater abundance of the good things of this world, and exempted accordingly from many of those hardships, and trials, and privations which poverty entails inevitably upon all who are called to bear it; then, I say, let me admonish such, that their wealth was not given to pamper pride, or to gratify selfishness, or to minister to the indulgence of caprice or passion. It was given them as a talent which they have been commissioned to occupy for the glory of God, and for the good of men; for, under the administration of that God who bringeth good out of evil, it is one purpose which the presence of the poor in society is designed to serve, to cultivate those charitable and kindly feelings which serve to bind the human family together, and the exercise of which is essential to our fulfilling the second commandment of the law, that we love our neighbour even as we love ourselves. True it is, that the objects on which the charity of those who possess the good things of this world may sometimes be expended, are not deserving creatures; they may be living vicious and ungodly lives, but ought we not to imitate in our charity the goodness of Him who causeth his sun to shine on the just and the unjust, and who sendeth down his rain to refresh the earth, that it may bring forth fruit to the evil and to the good? But, my brethren, while we ought for this reason to extend our charity, so far as it may be in our power—even to the most undeserving and unworthy whom we may have it in our power to relieve, it is at the same time a solemn consideration to think that many of the poor around us, wretched and miserable as they may seem to human observation, may nevertheless, like Lazarus, be the children of God—members of Christ's spiritual body. Let us therefore remember what an admonition is conveyed to us in the words which Christ has told us he shall address to those who neglect to improve their talents for the relief of his poor and suffering people, “I was an hungered,” he shall then say, “and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I

was naked, and ye clothed me not : sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. And when they shall say, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and gave thee no meat : when saw we thee thirsty, and gave thee no drink ; or naked, and clothed thee not ; or sick, and in prison, and visited thee not ? Then shall the Lord say, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me." Every one, it is true, has not the same favourable opportunity for becoming acquainted with the necessitous cases which may exist around him ; but, my friends, when there is a Society willing to undertake this important and often painful work, a work of pure and undefiled religion, in visiting the widows in their sore affliction, all who have the means ought to be willing to contribute, that those benevolent and christian individuals may not be compelled to witness

sufferings which they cannot relieve, and wants which they cannot supply. The Society, in whose behalf I have been commissioned this evening to address you, and for whose funds I have been appointed to solicit your aid, is one not only altogether unexceptionable in its object, but altogether excellent in the fidelity and diligence with which it is managed. It is no mere speculative scheme of philanthropy in whose behalf your humanity is now solicited. The scene of this Society's operation is your own city, and its administrators are from among yourselves. Let me then commend this excellent institution to your charitable support. As you freely received from the Lord of that substance which you possess, freely give to them that need ; for "he that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord." May God bless his word, and to his name be the praise. Amen.

THE WORD OF GOD RECOMMENDED TO THE YOUNG AS THEIR BEST GUIDE ;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. ALEXANDER HARVEY,

Minister of the Relief Church, Calton.

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way ? By taking heed thereto according to thy word." —PSALM cxix. 9

To the Christian nothing can be more delightful than the contemplation of youthful piety. At this period of life, the mind is peculiarly averse to serious reflection. It finds a congenial element in the objects of sense, from which it can extract many exquisite pleasures. Every landscape which presents itself, is arrayed in all the charms of novelty—every scene is fitted to please. The deceitfulness of the world has not yet been proved—the vanity of its pleasures is yet unfelt—the bitterness of disappointment has not yet soured the temper—nor the treachery of pretended friends wounded the soul. All is high hope and anxious expectation. The imagination revels amid its own gay fancies, and hope clothes the future in the brightest attire. If, indeed, at any time death has entered the dwelling of love, and made a vacancy in the family circle, the melancholy event is keenly felt, and sinks the spirits, but the heart soon eases itself by a copious discharge of tears. The conflict between joy and grief is bright ; and, as time

moves a little onward, the clouds of sorrow are completely dissipated by the brief sunshine of joy. And, in a little while, the world pleases as it wont to do, and its amusements charm as before.

At this season, too, Satan and his emissaries prefer all their claims with pressing urgency, and strive to enlist the young under their banner, and present all their solicitations in a shape best suited to win the unsuspecting heart. The passions, too, are now strong, and plead warmly for indulgence, and second powerfully by their deceitful advocacy the temptations from without. Is it wonderful that, from the scanty religious education of many of our youth, and the circumstances in which they are placed, so many of them should cast off the restraints of religion, and loathe the exercises of godliness ?

Now, amid all this inaptitude to serious reflection, and the numerous inducements to present indulgence peculiar to youth, it is truly gratifying to behold those who are

just commencing their career of activity, decided in their choice of religion—seeking after God in the midst of a degenerate age—confessing their Saviour, while many are denying him—and in earnest about the salvation of their souls, and making preparation for eternity. When we see the young enlisting under the Redeemer's banner, we feel over them the liveliest joy. We see them acting up to the dignity of their being, aspiring after a blessed immortality; and should God spare them in the world, we behold in them the ornaments of the Church, the safe-guards of their country, and the joy of all with whom in life they may be associated.

When you, then, my dear young friends, consider the natural tendencies of your hearts—the temptations to which you are exposed—the importance of resisting these to your usefulness and happiness—the worth of your souls, and the advantages of standing prepared for a coming eternity, no portion of the sacred volume can be better suited to the occasion of our present meeting, than the passage to which I purpose to direct your attention in the sequel of this discourse: “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.” Here we have,

- I. An important inquiry; and,
- II. A satisfactory answer to it.

May the illustration of these topics, this evening, be instrumental, under the divine blessing, of leading the many interesting young persons now before me to that Saviour, whom to know is life eternal!

I. An important inquiry demands our notice: “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?”

We may suppose this question put by the youth who has felt the deceitfulness of his own heart—has been convinced of his guilt and impurity before God—has been awakened to a sense of his danger as a transgressor of the divine law—and is deeply convinced that all his own efforts to obtain a title and meekness for heaven, must prove utterly unavailing. In the mouth of such a person the question would be put with the deepest earnestness. His manner would exhibit his anxiety to obtain the desired information. And such a one will not listen to the answer with the indifference of one who has no personal interest in the matter, but with the fixed attention of the condemned crimi-

nal to the announcement of the pardon which prolongs his life.

The word *way*, in Scripture, when applied to an individual generally, means a course of action—the general tenor of his walk and conversation. But, in the text, it seems more extensive in its signification, and appears to involve the state of the heart, as well as the external deportment. The conduct of mankind, in their natural state, is not only impure, but it springs from a heart thoroughly corrupt and unholy. In the further illustration of this particular, we remain,

1. That the young are by nature under the influence of moral pollution.

We have heard much of the innocence of the young, and the guilelessness of their hearts. But, alas! such representations are at variance with the Word of God and correct observation. We readily grant that, in general, the young are comparatively innocent. They are not hackneyed in vice, nor hardened in iniquity. They have not amassed the same load of guilt as the man who has grown grey-headed in his sins. There is likewise something amiable in the generous frankness and unsuspecting confidence of youth. These features of character induce many to look with indulgence on the levities and even follies of this period of life, and to employ many palliatives in describing their indiscretions. But, I would ask, is this warranted by the Book of God? or, is it founded in enlightened regard for the welfare of the young themselves?—To speak to them as if they were shielded in innocence, and may harmlessly indulge their inclinations for pleasure, is to cheer them on in their folly, and to foster the formation of habits, which may become the foulest blot in the character of the man, and may unfit them for extensive usefulness in time, and for the bliss of heaven through eternity.

My young friends, I hope you entertain no such sentiments as these with regard to yourselves. If you have paid the slightest attention to the movements of your own minds, and the feelings of your own hearts, you have felt there the stirrings of many evil passions—the desires which are altogether incompatible with innocence, and which, if you had not endeavoured to bridle, have covered you with shame, and plunged you in misery. Your own experience is sufficient to convince you that your natural

condition is that of enmity against God. This alienation of mind from God manifests itself in very early youth, and in a great variety of ways. It is seen in the mere child spurning parental authority—in the quarrels of the nursery—in the ingenious attempts made to conceal offences—and in many other features of mental development. It is in vain to allege, that vice is learned by imitation alone. Vicious principles will, no doubt, be strengthened, and develop themselves with greater boldness when called forth by bad example. But still the heart is naturally corrupt and deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. How many, in spite of all the restraints of parental authority, all the instructions of enlightened and affectionate parents, and all the force of pious example, go astray, and follow the natural bias of a corrupt heart. Although they are told of the meanness and guilt of lying, yet they frame their lips to utter falsehood; and although they are warned to guard against Sabbath profanation, yet it is the day on which they are most busy in mischief. I do not say, my young friends, that you have yet given so fearful a practical proof of the natural depravity of your hearts; but if you are better than others, it is not to yourselves you owe the difference, but to the grace of God, and the more favourable circumstances in which you have been placed. And I wish to bring every young person before me, under the permanent conviction that we are all naturally unholy—have evil hearts of unbelief, which are averse to God and to his ways, and very prone to every thing that is evil—hostile to all that the law of God enjoins, and reckless of our best interests.

If this be your natural condition, my young friends, and that it is, the Word of God and your own experience clearly prove, ought you to give unresisted indulgence to all your natural propensities?—or ought you merely to try to keep them under the restraints which the decencies of society demand?—or ought you not rather to place yourselves before the tribunal of Scripture, and inquire what your Creator requires of you, that you may please him and enjoy his approbation? Can you act up to the dignity of your being, and the end for which you were brought into existence, till you obtain the new heart and the right spirit, which the Bible declares is essential to a life of usefulness on earth, and to a meetness for heaven? Can you enjoy peace of con-

science while living secure in your sins? And although you have now all the strength and buoyancy of youth, can you be assured that these shall save you from the attack of disease, which may in a few weeks, or days, or hours, bring you to the dust of death. O! then, I trust that every youth now present, who has not already obtained the blessings of pardon and purity, will feel inclined to put this question with all earnestness: “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?”

2d. It is exceedingly desirable to obtain deliverance from this state of moral pollution in youth.

Were you placed in a situation of imminent danger, where a little delay might involve you in irremediable destruction, would you not seek instant deliverance? Were you placed in a leaky vessel, and saw the rapidly accumulating waters rendering your situation every moment more insecure, would you stand unmoved, and make no effort for your safety? Would you not work the pumps, and call all your energies into action, that, if possible, you might evade the danger? And can you be told by the God of truth, and hear the declaration re-echoed by your own conscience, that you are in the most imminent peril, so long as you continue in sin, and yet make no effort to escape? While in this state, you are in danger every moment of being summoned before the bar of your offended Judge, and of having your destiny fixed for ever in unutterable woe.

But some of you may say, we are yet young; there is time enough for the serious business of religion, and the solemn work of preparation for eternity. The following arguments, I trust, are sufficient to convince you that youth is the best season, and may be to you the only time to obtain deliverance from a state of guilt and impurity.

First. Because bad passions strengthen through indulgence, and are daily becoming more difficult to be eradicated. Whatever be the natural tendencies of the heart, these are comparatively easily checked before they have been frequently manifested. What at first is an act, by frequent repetition becomes a habit, and habits become inveterate by long indulgence. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots? then may ye do good who have been accustomed to do evil?” The longer you neglect the great duties of religion, the more aversion will you feel to all its exercises. You

will not then have to struggle merely against the natural propensities of your minds, but likewise have to overcome its fixed principles and its long-cherished habitudes. Besides, you will become more deeply entangled with the cares and the business of life, and more closely associated in companionship with those whose dispositions and habits are similar to your own; and it will be no easy matter to burst asunder all these fetters, and commence a course of seriousness, after you have become satiated with the pleasures of the world, and have lost all relish for its unhallowed indulgencies. The reasoning which is generally employed as an excuse for neglecting religion, is founded on a number of the most monstrous fallacies, and involves in it principles quite at variance with the Bible and general experience. I do not need to tell you with what ease the twig is bent, and how readily it takes any shape into which you wish to form it. But it is very different with the tree, when it has struck its roots deep into the soil, has waxed strong through age, and endured the storms of many winters. By the application of a

degree of force, you may make it yield for a little, but it will defy all your skill to give it a new and permanent direction. Something very similar to this is the human mind. In youth it is tender and susceptible, and easily takes any direction. But it is otherwise when habits are formed, and strengthened by repeated indulgence; then it generally remains firm and unbending, amid reproofs, admonitions, and all the moral means which you can make to bear upon it, to bring about a reformation. And hence there are comparatively few instances of genuine repentance and reformation in advanced life. The abandonment of some of the vices of youth is no proof of genuine reformation. The powers of indulgence are frequently gone, while the fires of unholy passions are raging with undiminished fierceness. The soul continues to burn with unholy desires, when age has frozen the genial current of the blood.

It is true the Spirit of God can regenerate the soul at any period of life; and, without his agency, no permanent or saving change can be produced at all in the young or the old. But, I would ask, whether may the young or the old most reasonably hope to obtain his quickening and sanctifying influences in answer to prayer? Can the husbandman, who has trifled away the months

without cultivating his fields, rea-

sonably anticipate a crop in harvest? In stead of filling his barns with plenty, would he not have to survey his field rank with noxious weeds; and were he then to begin to sow, while others were reaping, would he not justly expose himself to the scorn of every sober-minded individual? And can the man who has despised all the warnings and exhortations with which he was plied in youth to seek the Lord, and to walk in his ways, but who gave himself up to the service of sin, till he had so completely worn out all his faculties that its gratifications can please no longer, hope to receive any other answer to his entreaties, than the terrible declarations recorded in the Book of God, to warn all against such foolish presumption: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought my counsel, and would none of my reproofs; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh—when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind—when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call on me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but shall not find me. For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."

Secondly. The young have many facilities and encouragements to piety peculiar to their period of life.

While you, my young friends, have temptations peculiar to yourselves, you have also advantages which can only be enjoyed during the morning of life. And no sooner do you get engrossed with the harassing cares of the world, and entangled with its business, than difficulties multiply around you. Your minds will be occupied with other thoughts, and your attention directed to other objects. It is true no man ought to allow himself to become so deeply entangled with this world's affairs, as to neglect the great matters connected with his everlasting happiness. But duty is one thing, and to act up to the obligations under which we are laid is quite another thing. The genuine Christian finds it no easy matter to keep the flame of piety burning upon the altar of his heart while he mingles in business, and is harassed by the cares, and breathes the chilling atmosphere of this

world. He has to maintain a constant struggle to keep the world in its proper place. And do you leave that to be acquired upon the field of contest, which the far better equipped, and much more vigorous and skilful, soldier finds so much difficulty in preserving when the conflict has commenced? This is surely not to act a wise and prudent part.

Besides you are not yet inveigled with wicked associates. Your friendships are still in a great measure to form. It is of inconceivable importance to earnestness and usefulness in future life, that you choose those as your companions, who fear God and keep his commandments. "They who walk with wise men, shall be wise, while the companion of fools shall be destroyed." In such a city as this, you will come in contact with many of your own years who are already initiated into all the follies and vices of profligacy, and who, by their winning manners, and the glowing representations which they give of their pleasures, may seduce you to their party, and then you are on the broad road to ruin. Many a youth, on whose cheek the blush of modesty has sat with the most winning gracefulness, and who could weep at the recital of a tale of woe, has, in less than a year, become so abandoned, as to stand in unmoved obduracy, and trifle with a mother's warnings, and mock at her prayers and tears. And when once you get entangled, how are you to escape from the unholy confederacy with which you shall have become allied? You will not only have to do violence to your own inclinations, but have to brave their scorn, and despise their ridicule, which they shall liberally heap upon you. Before you then become thus entangled, enlist under the banner of the Saviour, and join some chosen band of youthful associates, who meet for prayer, and for promoting each other's spiritual and everlasting interests.

In addition to this, there are many encouragements held out to you in the Bible, to seek the Lord in youth. There is laid upon you all the force of a command, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." There is held out to you the most winning promise, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." Youthful piety meets with the warmest commendation. Timothy was praised, because that from a child he knew the Scriptures. God chose David, who

was the youngest in his father's house. O, then, my dear young friends, be persuaded this very evening, to consecrate yourselves, and all that you have, to the service of the Lord, and then all things shall work together for your good!—"For you to live will be Christ, and to die gain." From this time, then, cry unto God, and say, Thou art our Father, and the guide of our inexperienced youth. But,

Thirdly. Remember, my young friends, that your life is uncertain, and you cannot tell how long you may have to live. You have often seen the rose opening its bud to the morning sun; and, from its healthy hue, it promised to endure, till its leaves dropt through natural decay. But ere noon, some rude hand had cropt it, before it had time to unfold all its beauties. And thus has it frequently been with the young, and thus may it also be with you. Your own observation abundantly confirms this statement. You cannot visit a single churchyard, without being forcibly reminded of this truth. You cannot look over the many spacious burial fields that are attached to our city, without seeing the grave of all lengths and sizes and dimensions. You cannot read the many lettered stones, and survey the little mounds where no monument tells even the name of their lowly tenants, without being told, here lies the little babe, and here the sprightly boy; and there the stout and healthy youth, all at once torn down in the full bloom of life. And of how few will you read, "this aged man came down to his grave like a full shock of corn in his season." Can you, then, my young friends, with any safety to your eternal interests, delay the vast concerns of eternity till some future period? "Death's thousand doors stand open," and you know not when you may be called to pass through their gloomy portals. To you the admonition is likewise tendered: "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." Delay not till to-morrow what may be much better done to-day. For "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." And on this emphatic *now*, matters of infinite moment may be suspended.

Let then the question in the text be put with all earnestness this very evening; "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" We proceed now,

II. To consider the *satisfactory answer*,

which the text gives to this important question, " By taking heed thereto according to thy word."

1. The young are directed to take heed to their way. Want of consideration has been the ruin of many a hopeful youth. They have no experience themselves of the dangers of the world, and the temptations with which they are surrounded, and they are ready to regard the warning that is tendered in love as the result of cold suspicion. They are apt to consider it either as a reflection on their discretion, or an attack upon the character of others. And, therefore, they are frequently inattentive to the most friendly admonitions, till they are involved in vice and misery. But I trust you will maintain a watchful inspection over your hearts and your conduct. Flee the very appearance of evil. To retain for a single moment an impure desire or sinful thought, involves you in guilt, and exposes you to danger. Repel with firmness every solicitation, however friendly its aspect, that would draw you from the path of rectitude, though it were but by a single hairbreadth. When you have once overleaped the boundary that separates right from wrong, and trodden forbidden ground, your downward career may become fearfully rapid. A few indiscretions at first may involve you in a course of action, that in a short period may terminate in an ignominious end. Many a youth who has begun his devious career with Sabbath profanation, has gone from one stage in crime to another, till he has brought himself to the gibbet. Think not lightly, then, of first deviations from the path of rectitude. Remember that, as immortal beings, every thought you indulge, every word you speak, and every step you take is most important. It goes to make up that account you must render at the bar of God, before an assembled universe.

But to cleanse your way,

2. You must take heed to it according to God's word. The Bible is the only infallible standard of faith and manners.

First. It tells you how you may obtain pardon for past guilt. The scheme of salvation developed in the Bible, furnishes a glorious manifestation of all the divine perfections, and assures you, that God can, consistently with them all, and the stability of his government, extend pardon to all who believe in his Son. You are told in the word of God, of the amazing love of the

Almighty—of the astonishing condescension of the Saviour, of his life of poverty, and toil, and labour, and his death of agony and shame, to make an atonement for the sins of all who believe on his name. You are assured, that the law has been magnified and made honourable, and an everlasting righteousness brought in. Gethsemane's garden, can witness the extreme agony by which your guilt was expiated. Calvary, and its rending rocks, can tell of the anguish of the mighty sufferer. The darkened sun, and the opening graves declared how he spoiled principalities and powers, and triumphed over them. And his resurrection from the grave, and ascension into heaven and exaltation to the right hand of the majesty on high, demonstrate that redemption is accomplished. And now you have but to look to his atoning sacrifice, and put your trust in a risen Saviour, and repose your confidence on his finished righteousness; for the word of Jehovah has declared it, and the blood of Christ has ratified it, and the oath of the Eternal has confirmed it, that "there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ died to save sinners even the chief."

Secondly. But the word of God also directs you to the only source of moral purity. It tells you that the Holy Spirit is ready to renovate your hearts, and to sanctify your natures. It directs you to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. It assures you that the blood of Christ Jesus cleanses from all sin. It exhibits to you the great pattern of moral excellence, after which you ought continually to copy. "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord," &c. Jesus has left you an example that you should walk in his steps. Lay aside, then, every weight, and the sins which so easily beset you, and run with patience the race that is set before you.

The Bible also furnishes you with the most powerful motives to seek after purity of heart and of conduct. It assures you that sin and misery are inseparably linked together; that Christ died to promote your sanctification. "Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, by the washing of water through the word, that he

present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any

such thing ; but that it should be holy and without blemish." It declares that heaven is a holy place, and that without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

Thirdly. The word of God furnishes you with a perfect rule for the regulation of every part of your conduct. It is a perfect directory to guide you in the performance of every duty. If you regard life as a journey, the Bible is the map on which is delineated, with perfect accuracy, the path that leads to heaven. Every devious path and byway is clearly pointed out. Viewing life as a voyage, it is the chart by which you are to steer your course across the stormy ocean of life to the haven of everlasting repose. Every rock and quicksand on which you are in danger of making shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience is pointed out with unerring precision. And the Bible has a virtue in it which no mercator's chart ever possessed. It also discovers and exhibits to your constant view the polar star, and whatever winds may blow—whatever clouds may intervene—and whatever waves may swell, it elevates every one who consults it with diligence, and puts faith in its discoveries, above them all. It directs you to a course, where favouring breezes perpetually blow, so that you may fearlessly voyage along till you reach the port of peace. To lay aside this figurative language, the Bible clearly points out to you all the duties you owe to your God, to your fellow-men, and to yourselves. It clearly describes your social, personal, and relative duties in every situation, station, and period of life. It tells you what sins you ought to avoid, and what conduct you are bound to pursue ; what companions you should choose, and what associates you ought to shun. And it tells you how you may obtain strength to enable you to accomplish the whole. And if, in compliance with its warm and pressing invitations, you take Christ's yoke upon you, which is easy, and his burden, which is light, the love of Christ will constrain you thus to judge, " that if one died for all, then are all dead," &c. You never can study the Bible with too much attention and care. Other books may mislead you—corrupt your morals and pervert your hearts, but this will make you wise unto salvation. O, then, my young friends, daily search the Scriptures, for in them ye have eternal life, and they testify of Jesus !

But you must remember, that however valuable the Word of God is, it is but an in-

strument. And although it be an instrument devised by infinite wisdom, and therefore admirably fitted to accomplish the end for which it was given, yet it can only accomplish your salvation when made to bear upon your hearts by the agency of the Divine Spirit. Hence the necessity of prayer for his enlightening and sanctifying influences. You ought never to sit down to the study of the Bible without prayer. Prayer is the key that unlocks the treasures that are contained in the holy Scriptures. Were the Bible always studied in a devout and pious frame there would be few controversies about its doctrines. Prayer is like Jacob's ladder, it opens up a communication between heaven and earth. It brings down Omnipotence to our aid. The Holy Spirit is given in answer to prayer. Were Christians more fervent in prayer there would be fewer divisions among them, and much more of love and every kindly disposition. However widely they may differ in speculation, no sooner do they go to their closet and bend their knees at the throne of grace, than they appear as the children of one Father.

You, my young friends, who have associated yourselves together to read the word of God in the exercise of fervent prayer, and to promote each other's spiritual improvement, have acted wisely ; and I trust you have already experienced many advantages resulting from it. I would rejoice to know that every youth in this large and populous city had joined your society. Yours is truly a holy alliance. In your meetings there is heard neither the din of revelry, the impure jest, nor the wanton song, but the psalm of praise and the voice of prayer. Your fellowship has in it the benevolence of angels, and like these ministering spirits you are striving by mutual good offices to benefit the heirs of salvation. You are trying, in youth, to attune your voices for the anthems of eternity. You must learn to lisp the song of redemption on earth, and feel it more harmonious in your ears, and more animating to your hearts, than a whole orchestra of licentious music, before you can hope to join the general assembly and Church of the first-born in heaven, and unite with all the ransomed of the Lord in shouting salvation to the Lamb. O, my young friends, if my feeble voice has any power to cheer you on, and if my exhortation could recruit your ranks, I would rejoice to spend them in so good a cause ! But imagine my weak arguments, seconded this evening by

all the energy of your parents' prayers, by the approbation of all the pious on earth, and by all the blessed inhabitants in heaven, and shall you not listen to solicitations so powerful, when the call is to the enjoyment of happiness here and of endless felicity hereafter! And tell me, ye sons and daughters of folly, if, in your meditative moments your hearts command not the choice which you affect, amid your thoughtless gaiety, to despise. Amid your laughter that is mad, and your meaningless mirth, have you ever experienced a joy and a peace like the Christian's when he rises from his knees and exclaims, with his Bible in his hand, as his charter for eternity, "This God is my God for ever and ever; he will be my guide even unto death?"

Let me again, my young friends, entreat you, as you value your souls, and as you wish to be useful in time, and happy through eternity, to devote yourselves to the service of God. The thoughtless around you may ridicule your choice and laugh at your seriousness, but where will be their mockery when approaching dissolution exhibits this world in its own comparative insignificance, and opens to their eyes, closing for ever on earthly scenes, the momentous realities of eternity? And where will be their scorn when the graves shall give up their dust at the blast of the archangel's trumpet, and summon them to take their stand with all the despisers of the gospel on the left hand of the judge. They may ridicule your choice now, but will they be of the same mind when they see you clad in all the glories of immortal beauty, and invited to spend an eternity of bliss in the presence of God and of the Lamb, and themselves vessels of wrath fitted for destruction—and doomed

to dwell in everlasting fire with the devil and his angels?

But perhaps some of you, my young friends, may see no great need for such urgency even in a matter of so great importance. You are young, and anticipate many days of health, and of vigour. And you wish to spend a few of the years of youth, when you have the greatest relish for pleasure, in what you may esteem harmless indulgence. I would most willingly grant all you can desire could I be assured that the delay which you desire is compatible with your everlasting safety. The youngest present may not see the termination of the year on which you have just entered. How many of your acquaintance, during the year that is past, have been carried to the house appointed for all living, who were at this season last year as young, and sprightly, and healthy, as yourselves. Presume not on futurity. The seasons may revolve as formerly, but you may be in eternity before the termination of another year. O, could I unfurl before you the records of heaven, on which the number of your days are inscribed, with what breathless eagerness would you read the writing that told you the day of your death! The impression would never be effaced, and you would instantly begin in earnest to make preparation for that solemn hour. But this is what no earthly power can do. The book of God's decrees is sealed, and hid from mortal vision. But the very uncertainty in which you stand, and to which you foolishly trust, were you wise, would rouse you to instant exertion. "To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For there is neither work nor knowledge, nor device in the grave, to which we are hastening." Amen.

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SERMON by the Rev. JOSEPH SOMERVILLE, Glasgow.
LECTURE by the Rev. THOMAS M'CRIE, D.D., Edinburgh.

Price :

**ON THE APPARENT DISCREPANCY BETWIXT THE APOSTLES
PAUL AND JAMES, ON THE SUBJECT OF JUSTIFICATION;**

A SERMON,

By the Rev. JOSEPH SOMERVILLE,

Minister of St. John's Chapel, Glasgow.

What doth it profit my brethren, though a man say, he hath faith and hath not works: can faith save him?"—JAMES ii. 14.

IT is an allegation as ancient, we believe, as the primitive age of Christianity, that the two inspired Apostles, Paul and James, enunciate a different, and what seems a contradictory proposition, relative to a cardinal and fundamental article of the Gospel system—the Justification of Sinners. The objection has been revived and repeated in every succeeding period, and has been the occasion of introducing not a little perplexity and confusion of ideas, into the minds of many serious inquirers after the truth. To not a few, the contradiction has appeared so palpable and staring, as to cast a general suspicion and discredit upon the entire doctrine; to create a presumption against the possibility of the perplexed knot of controversy being ever disentangled; while multitudes of professed Christians, feeling their dearest interests and vital hopes implicated in the subject, have espoused opposite sides of the question, and have arrayed themselves under the standards of the two respective oracles—the one class enrolling themselves under the banners of Paul, the other professing to be the disciples of James.

That such a circumstance should ever have happened, is an event deeply to be lamented, from the occasion which it has given to the scoffing of infidels, as well as from the danger, proverbially great, of Christians themselves running to extremes; as also from the fact which cannot be controverted, that he who grafts and embodies

good works with faith, as the material or joint terms of his justification before God, disclaims the doctrine of the imputation of the Redeemer's merits, substitutes his own righteousness in room of the righteousness of Christ, and thus frustrates the whole economy of Gospel redemption; while he who disbelieves good works as exemplified in his life and conversation from faith, who does not admit them to be essential to salvation, and who does not assiduously cultivate them as the evidence of a transformed nature, and as constituting a meetness for the happiness of immortality, is equally guilty of cancelling his charter to everlasting glory, and must be for ever excluded from the beatitudes of Paradise, for this plain reason, that he is destitute of the spiritual qualifications and graces that render a human being fit for the enjoyment of the heavenly society, and capable of participating in its sublime triumphs.

Now the true and simple position of the case is this: the Apostle Paul, in language absolute and unqualified, asserts, that a man is justified by faith, in the absence, and to the entire exclusion, of every thing having the shadow or semblance of merit on the part of the fallen creature; such, for example, as moral qualities, pre-requisites, repentance, new obedience, faith itself, contemplated as a moral virtue, or any personal attributes, original or acquired; or, as he styles it, "by the works of the law," meaning by

that expression, not only the observance of the Mosaic ceremonial, but also that measure of external compliance with the claims of the moral law, which any man by the application and improvement of his natural faculties, is qualified to render; and this for the obvious reason, that this measure of homage and duty being always inadequate, and paid by those who, as sinners, are judicially lying under a weight of wrath, cannot justify; while there is a contradiction involved in the very supposition, that the same law which has laid the world under condemnation, can procure its absolution from punishment, and restoration to the divine favour. To this it may be added, that our "good works," as they are styled, cannot obtain for us a title to the immunities and the privileges of the Gospel, because, being by nature wholly guilty and legally condemned, we have forfeited every boon, and have merited every judgment. They cannot endow us with moral fitness for the holiness and the honours of the upper sanctuary, for they cannot regenerate our depraved nature, or instil into our souls principles of godliness, or impregnate our hearts with devotional affections. As little able are they to establish for us a claim to the special and transforming influences of the Holy Spirit, for in that case, our sanctification would be of debt and not of grace. Neither can they make any reparation or atonement for the multitude of past iniquities, or repeal the smallest instalment of the debt of obligation we owe to heaven, because the law of God demands a full and perfect satisfaction for every offence, and inasmuch as we cannot avoid transgressing, even in the most fervent of the prayers we breathe, and in the most spiritual of the performances we execute, and in the most holy of the duties we discharge. "Wherefore we conclude," says this Apostle, "that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. For as many as are under the law are under the curse. Not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by his mercy he saved us. To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works."

And so zealously and perseveringly does

St. Paul inculcate this distinctive and staple doctrine, that it pervades and overflows in all his writings; giving them a feature that is peculiar and characteristic; while he asserts that there is an utter opposition, an eternal contradiction, between every thing having the name and semblance of work, and the free, boundless grace of the Gospel. He avers, that the very terms, work and grace, have a direct and perfect contrariety of signification, being completely antipodes to one another; and having this essential distinction, it is morally impossible that they can ever coalesce, or suggest any, but a totally different class of ideas; unless you do the violence of making them convertible terms, and thus confound their intrinsic and fundamental properties. "If by grace," says he, "then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then it is no more of grace, otherwise work is no more work." At the same time he asseverates, that all who incorporate their own fancied excellencies, their gentle and generous dispositions, their vaunted charities and virtuous practices, with faith, in the negotiation of the great question of their forgiveness and acceptance with God, undermine and upset the whole constitution of gratuitous, sovereign mercy; repel and neutralize the transcendent merits of the Son of God, and thus consummate the desolation of all their hopes for eternity; for he justly and emphatically adds, "if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

But the apostle James seems to be the propounder and advocate of a very different doctrine. Instead of asserting and upholding the unity of faith in our justification, and concurring with his great cotemporary, Paul, in discarding all moral endowments, all pious principles, and all virtuous doings from having any share or co-operation in the forgiveness of a true believer, he appears rather to contravene the assumption, to combat the position, and to direct his remonstrances against its adoption; while he inculcates on mankind this other and cardinal truth, that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." Moral deeds seem to stand higher in his estimation than in that of the apostle Paul; he assigns to them a higher station in the system of human recovery, for he not only expatiates upon their primary excellence and their paramount necessity as co-operating with faith to the justification of sinners, but he repre-

sents the faith that exists by itself, as no better than a dream, a phantom, a nullity, a vain conceit; and he compares such a solitary insulated thing, to a shadow devoid of substance, to a body that is destitute of the animating principle. "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead, for as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

Now our object is to show, that there is no counter-testimony, no real opposition, betwixt the doctrine taught by St. Paul and that propounded by St. James; but that when properly examined and understood, their sentiments will be found beautifully to tally; and the seeming discordance betwixt them, to admit of an easy and satisfactory reconciliation. We have already stated the full amount of the apparent discrepancy, and shall here only briefly notice the fact, which we are afterwards to illustrate, that it is entirely attributable to the two Apostles having specific and distinctive ends in view; to their agitating the same subject under different and separate heads, and to their taking, not a contrary or inconsistent, but a peculiar and special consideration of the same momentous tenet, under the two great branches into which it naturally resolves itself.

Now, in proof of the assertion, that there is a perfect cordiality, and agreement, betwixt the two Apostles on the vital point at issue, we observe first, in reference to James, that he enunciates, and enforces, the very identical doctrine so fully and triumphantly established by St. Paul, "that a man is justified by faith without the works of the law." "If any of you," he observes, "lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven of the wind and tossed." Now the inference from these words is obvious, and cannot be mistaken. If faith alone—and the Apostle in this passage makes no allusion whatever to works of any kind, but plainly excepts them—be, as he maintains, the only medium of access to the Father, the great master-key which unlocks for the sinner the gates of the heavenly sanctuary; if it be moreover the only means of procuring a propitious reception for the services we pay, and the obedience we render, and without which they would inevitably be rejected at the court on high; then it follows, as a natural and un-

avoidable result, that the faith which thus gains the ear of heaven to the voice of our supplications, as well as obtains acceptance, for all our pious performances, can be no other than the living and saving faith delineated by the apostle Paul, and to which he ascribes such marvellous effects; by which our persons are justified and our sins forgiven, and with the operations of which all gospel distinctions and privileges are intimate, and from which they are inseparable. In this case, it is absolutely impossible that our moral attainments and graces can ever be admitted as justifying our persons, if these works and virtues are approved and accepted, solely on account of faith; and would, as the Apostle here affirms, be denounced and rejected without it. Again, "harken, my beloved brethren, has not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him." Now the obvious construction to be put upon these words is this, that God has selected many obscure and indigent individuals to be made partakers of the spiritual and eternal blessings of his grace, and that it is faith which unites them to Jesus, and gives them a personal interest in these inestimable treasures. They are also said to be "heirs of the kingdom of faith;" if so, then they must be justified by faith. It is farther added, the kingdom is prepared for them that love God, and we know that faith is the seed of that holy affection by which we are assimilated to the divine image, and gradually qualified "for the inheritance of the saints in light;" for it is elsewhere specified that it worketh by love, and therefore faith is the medium or instrument of our reconciliation with God, through Jesus Christ, and is identified with our title to the joys of everlasting life.

We shall adduce only one example more. "Is any sick among you, let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." And it is added, "the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he has committed sins they shall be forgiven him." Now, is not the plain interpretation of such a declaration this, that it is faith or the prayer of faith, independently of any works of the law, or any deeds of righteousness to which such extraordinary effects are here imputed, not only the patient's recovery from sickness, and restoration to the joys of health,

but the remission of his delinquencies, and the acceptance of his person, as righteous in the sight of Jehovah; in other words, is not the apostle James here asserting and vindicating, in language as determinate and direct as man can use, the very identical tenet, so clearly propounded, and so eloquently elucidated, by his cotemporary Paul.

And, in regard to the latter, is it not eminently and conspicuously true, that he is as strenuous an asserter of the obligation of good works, as a zealous defender of their indefeasible interests, and as bold and uncompromising in his asseverations respecting the absolute necessity of their concurrence with faith to the ultimate and eternal redemption of mankind, as his brother James. We challenge and defy any man to show that St. Paul, in his writings, does not apply the same just criterion to try the profession, and to test the character of every pretender to the Christian name; if he does not recommend and enforce in terms as emphatic and with arguments as irrefragable, the supreme value and last consequence of cultivating heavenly-mindedness, and of exemplifying irreproachable purity of deportment in all who aspire to the lofty character of believers in Christ Jesus; if he does not interpose safeguards and securities as effectual for preventing the sacred enclosure of christian privilege and immunity from being violated by the unhallowed and unclean, and the grace of God from being turned into licentiousness; if he does not prescribe and enjoin the practice of personal godliness by motives as imperative, and does not uphold the exceeding extent and spirituality of the requirements of the unalterable law of God, by reasonings as powerful, and by sanctions as awful. He avows, in terms as round and unmeasured as any employed by the apostle James, that "not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.—He is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men but of God.—Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.—These things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works.—Holding faith and a good conscience; which some having put away con-

cerning faith have made shipwreck.—Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.—They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him: from such turn away." Now, we appeal to the unprejudiced reason of every candid mind, if any testimonies can be collected from the whole writings of James, more explicit than these, in favour of practical and universal righteousness; more conclusive against a speculative and inoperative faith, or that conveys in language more glowing and energetic the necessity of good works coinciding with faith, to the carrying on, and completion of a sinner's redemption; or that avouches more pointedly, moral virtue to be not only indispensable, but a real and component element of salvation. And does he not bear unequivocal testimony to the felicitous and glorious consequences necessarily and unalterably resulting from the operation of saving faith; and does he not every-where aver, that from this hallowed source flow all the holy affections that sweeten and that sanctify the life of man; all the lofty qualities that ennable and refine the character to the utmost perfection and polish of which it is susceptible. And does he not prove this to be the origin of all the meek and magnanimous achievements of Christians in the cause of piety and philanthropy, and the germ of all that constellation of sublime virtues that shed a glory so benign and so brilliant around human nature! And do not those facts, to which many others might be added, go to demonstrate with an accumulation and force of evidence, such as no objector can be well conceived to resist, that there is a perfectly good intelligence between the two parties; that the Apostles are here not divided, but united in sentiment; both upholding and vindicating, as the occasion requires, distinct, but main pillars of the same great temple of immutable and immortal truth; and that, so far from there being any real discordance betwixt them, or want of harmony, there is an admirable congruity, and a beautiful consistency?

Now it is a recognised canon, in all sound and enlightened criticism, that, to estimate the conclusiveness of an author's reasonings as well as to perceive the propriety of his deductions, due consideration be always paid to the precise object he has in view in taking up and treating his subject, as well as to the general scope and bearing of his whole argument. Without attending to this pri-

mary and material circumstance, the greatest injustice may be done to a writer ; his meaning may be misrepresented, the soundness of his conclusions disputed, and his whole work exposed to the charge of containing inconsistencies, and even contradictions. Attention to this plain and acknowledged rule of interpretation, the constant application of which is essential to the right understanding and elucidation of the Holy Scriptures, will furnish us at once with a key to the only and true solution of the apparent want of unity, in the present case, betwixt the apostles Paul and James. They confine themselves to different points of the same great question. They have separate objects in view in the discussion, while they address themselves to very different classes of persons.

The apostle Paul took upon him the task of unsettling certain fundamental errors that were almost universally prevalent in his day. He felt the necessity of administering a timely antidote to the proud and presumptuous spirit of self-righteousness, which has penetrated into the very core and substance of our corrupted constitution. He found himself encircled by a polite and polished heathen world, which, though depressed to the extreme pitch of moral degradation, and immersed in the lowest depths of pollution, nevertheless "arrogated to itself a kind of pre-eminence in manners and morals, pluming itself upon its artificial graces, and its many monuments of national and military virtue, continually offering incense to its own vanity, and imaginary bright assemblage of public and private excellencies ;" by philosophers, who gloried in the splendour of the reputation they had acquired for learning and wisdom, and who maintained perfection itself to be an attainment within the reach of every man. He was also encompassed by Jews, no less proud and no less pompous, and equally lofty in their assumptions of moral supremacy—who boasted of their especial and national distinctions—of their peculiar sanctity and exclusive relationship to God—who deceived themselves with the imagination that they were paragons of piety and purity, and who never doubted for an instant that their scrupulous observance of ceremonial rites, and their exact fulfilment of moral precepts, would invest them with a plea and passport to the divine forgiveness, and guarantee their possession of the glories of an endless life. The Apostle undertook to dissipate so fatal

an illusion, and to disabuse their minds of so egregious a mistake. He does so, by presenting them with a full length portrait of what is the real character and condition of every human being by nature, a rebel, judicially guilty, and in a state of condemnation before God ; implicated in the darkest criminality, and convicted on ten thousand charges of highest demerit, without his having any exculpation to offer, or plea to prefer in mitigation of sin, or arrest of judgment. And this he affectingly proves, in his Epistle to the Romans, by a special reference to the actual existing circumstances of the heathen and Jewish worlds. He begins with the ungodly heathen, and, from the appalling representation given in the first chapter, of "the extremities to which they carried their excesses and depravation of manners," presents us with a most hideous and humiliating picture of what our humanity is, even in its meridian of civilization and refinements, when it has broken loose from all the laws and restraints of religion, and has abandoned itself to the volcanic eruptions of its uncaged and unbridled propensities to evil. At the same time, he testifies, in relation to those who were esteemed the most wise and virtuous of the pagan world—who were the self-constituted oracles of the age in which they flourished—who made the highest pretensions to purity and perfection, that their principles and conduct, when rigidly sifted, would be found to be no way superior to those of the individuals on whom they sat as critics and censors ; that they who thus judged and reprobated the behaviour of others, were themselves chargeable with the very same or similar obliquities ; were such violators of the light and law of nature, and practised such enormities, as left them wholly inexcusable, and justly condemned by the great moral Ruler of the universe. Whence he infers, and makes good his position, that "the Gentiles could lay no claim to the favour of God ; that they have no inherent or acquired merit to recommend them ; nothing on which they could found a legal title to acceptance with the divine Majesty :" nor could they possibly obtain justification in any other way than by the righteousness of Christ, imputed to them and received by faith alone.

The Apostle next proceeds to examine the case of the peculiar and favoured people of God ; and he demonstrates, by arguments equally conclusive and irresistible, that the Jew has no better plea to prefer, no higher

ground to occupy, no assumptions more valid to rely upon, in his hopes of reconciliation with heaven, " though he rests in the law, makes his boast of God, knows his will, and approves the things that are most excellent ; " for he also is destitute of personal holiness ; in his best performances he breaks the law, dishonours God, and never renders more than a partial and external compliance with the divine will ; while his measure of obedience falls incalculably short of the strictness and spirituality of the divine requirements. The Jew had, indeed, many advantages over the heathen, in point of religious knowledge and external privilege ; but, in relation to moral qualifications, and justifying personal righteousness, he rates no higher, and is on a perfect equality with the Gentile. " What then," adds the Apostle, " are we better than they ? no, in no wise ; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin, as it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one. Every mouth must be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God ; for God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all."

But the apostle James had another and a distinct object in view. He addresses a different description of persons ; he sets himself to combat another delusion, and to defend the doctrine from an opposite objection. He does not attempt to disprove or negative any proposition of St. Paul ; he does not impugn the truth of a single announcement of his, nor does he arraign the accuracy of an individual expression ; but giving a full and unexcepted admission to all the statements of his cotemporary, and even sanctioning and confirming them by his own clear and constant testimony, he takes up a position which the other had not so much insisted upon ; vindicates the doctrine from the imputation of having the slightest immoral tendency ; evinces his zeal in redeeming it from every exception, and fences it against all abuse. He knew that there was nothing, however innocent or innocuous in itself, incapable, through the weakness or wickedness of men, of being deteriorated or disparaged. He had, in all likelihood, already witnessed, and he fore-saw, with prophetic anguish, the miserable perversion that would be made of this vital article of Christianity—" the test of a standing or falling Church." He was conscious, perhaps, of the somewhat loose and un-sensed state in which the doctrine was left

to posterity ; and he deprecated the thought that any man should ever regard the faith, by which we are justified, so freely through the surpassing riches of divine mercy, as distinct from morals. He deplored the mischief of dis severing things that ought never to be separated ; and, in the anxious fore-castings of his pious mind, he was apprehensive of the lengths to which graceless and godless sinners would, in after ages, carry their temerity and their audacity, in practising upon themselves and others the most fatal impositions ; in arrogating to themselves the character of true believers, and in presuming upon the safety of their spiritual condition, when they could not exhibit one trace or vestige of spirituality, or show one lineament of a regenerated humanity. He conjures such persons, in the plainest and most pointed terms, that " they abstain from perverting the right ways of the Lord." And he forewarns them, that it is at their soul's utmost peril, and as they must answer for it at the judgment of the great day, that " they prostitute so blessed and glorious a doctrine as plenary forgiveness of sin by faith in Christ Jesus ; to lull themselves into a state of false confidence and security ; to foster a love of indolence and presumption ; to make faith the accomplice to licentious affections, and to sanctify immoral practices." And while he denounces that desecration of this divine principle as a flagrant enormity, and labours to suppress it as a fearful evil, he farther certifies, that the splendid legacy of gratuitous pardon and eternal life, bequeathed by Christ Jesus to a guilty but believing world, cannot in any wise, or by any possibility, be detrimental to the interests of godliness and morality, to the evolution of pious feelings, and to the growth and acceleration of heavenly virtue ; that faith must ever be co-existent with true holiness ; that its proper sphere of influence is the heart ; that it must be amalgamated with the substance of the inmost thoughts and springs of action, that it may act on the temper and will, and diffuse its vital energy over the whole conversation and deportment. In a word, he shows that the faith, which justifies a man, is a seminal principle, or rather a living depository of holy principles ; the germinating seed of the divine life in the soul ; the prolific source of all sanctity of character and all spiritual improvement ; while any other species and modification of faith, as it is not genuine, but spurious—not real, but counterfeited—not a habit of mind, but a mere external

act—not the production of grace, but an illusion of the imagination—is not, and cannot be the bond of union to Christ; and is not connected with the possession of any one of the blessings of salvation, but is a mere deception—a fallacy and a vain mockery.

Now, these are the respective topics taken up and discussed by the two Apostles: “And let it be distinctly borne in mind, that they are not agitating the same question; are not treating the same subject, but under different aspects and relations, and with diametrically opposite ends in view.” Each states the point in the light which the construction of his particular argument requires, while both address their reasonings to a very dissimilar class of characters. The apostle Paul has tasked himself to prove, that a man is justified or pardoned as a guilty rebel in the sight of a holy God, by the operation of faith, simply considered, irrespective of all moral dispositions and virtues, or any thing having the shape or shadow of personal merit. The apostle James does not impeach or confute this principle at all; but, taking it for granted and established, he interposes only because of the consequences which he dreaded ungodly men might deduce from an article of the Christian creed, so illustrative of the exuberance and prodigality of divine grace; and he undertakes to prove, that such only as are participators of this living and operative faith, can, in any case, be justified; that, with the exception of this faith, no other deserves the name, but is utterly fictitious and nugatory—a mere dream or nonentity, which has no existence but in the individual’s own brain; no more faith, nor entitled to be called so, than has a mass of matter, from which the life and spirit have disappeared, a title to be denominated a man. The apostle Paul is portraying the efficacy of a vital energetic faith, which ascertains our inseoffment into all the glories of redemption; which works by love; transforms us into the very image of God, which is accompanied also with all the moral evidences of grace and heavenly-mindedness. The apostle James is descanting upon a faith such as the most ignorant and unprincipled of human beings may arrogate and parade—which has no solid basis to rest upon—which exists alone, and is a mere figment of the mind; at best, the offspring of sheer terror, connected only with the furnace and the flame—the judgment and the retribution,

even such a faith as the devils possess, who believe and tremble; but which has no reference to the Redeemer’s atonement, or the mercy of God, and which is barren of all good works. The one is discoursing of our justification before heaven, exclusive of all moral endowments, and all virtuous attainments; the other, of our justification in the estimation of our fellow-men at the tribunal of our own consciences, and at the bar of final judgment, by virtue of spiritual graces and holy performances, attesting and confirming the reality of divine faith. In a word, the apostle Paul is describing the character and operations of justifying faith; the apostle James is delineating its practical effects or sanctifying influences.

The term *justification*, though it bears in Scripture one general and determinate signification, implying a declaration of righteousness, admits, nevertheless, of two distinct modifications. In its ordinary acceptation it denotes, as we have seen, the possession of an interest in the divine favour, the remission of sin, and the acceptance of our persons as righteous in the sight of God; while, in another sense, it implies a vindication of our characters as true believers—“a demonstration of the sincerity of our christian profession, and the vitality of our faith, by such appropriate and practical attestations, as will bring assurance to the souls of the redeemed, and ensure the commendation of their fellow-men, both here and at the day of solemn reckoning.” In this last and particular sense, the word occurs in many places of Scripture. For example, we find one of the friends of Job accosting him in the following terms: “If thou hast any thing to say, answer me, for I desire to justify thee;” that is, I wish to exculpate your character from the foul and false aspersions cast upon it, to set it in a favourable light, and to rebut the calumnies of your adversaries. Again, it is affirmed, of wisdom or true religion, that she “is justified of all her children;” that is, her purity is established—the reasonableness of her conduct is illustrated—her consistency and moral excellence are demonstrated by all her true friends. In this sense, God himself is said to be justified. “That thou mightest be justified in thy savings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged;” that is, that thou mightest be declared just, and that the absolute rectitude and immutable sanctity of thy moral administration might be manifested to the whole universe.

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Now, it is in this latter acceptation that the apostle James generally employs the term justification. He is not like St. Paul, dis- coursing of the great deed of a sinner's ab- solution from condemnation, the cancelling of all capital charges, and the obtaining a title to everlasting glory ; but he is treating of the justification of persons already acquit- ted. His reference is to an event later in point of time, and consequently he alludes not to the first and irrevocable act of amnesty pronounced by God, but he means, by jus- tification, true believers evidencing them- selves to be such in the estimation of all competent judges—their attesting and seal- ing the undoubted sincerity of their faith, and giving a triumphant refutation of all the imputations of hypocrisy, and all the other malignant invectives launched by the un- godly against them, by the incorruptible in- tegrity of their principles, and by the un- stained purity of their whole moral deport- ment. And that this is really the case—that the justification intended by the one Apostle, is the pronouncing of a judicial sentence of righteousness ; while the jus- tification described by the other is only declarative of such a deed having taken place, is made further apparent, from the very illustrations James himself adduces in sup- port and corroboration of his argument, and especially by his citation of the case of Abraham's justification. " Was not Abra- ham, our father," says he, " justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar ? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect." Now, it appears from conclusive and incontestable evidence, that the Apostle is not here referring to the original act of Abram's justification as a sinner in the sight of God ; for that transaction took place no less than thirty years prior to the event here specified. Abram was a true believer and a saint, so early as the time when he left his native country and his father's house, to emigrate at the divine command, and serve the living God in a land of strangers ; for Scripture distinctly avouches, that " he went out by faith, not knowing whither he went ;" and it was soon after his evacuating the country of idolators, and migrating to the territory of Canaan, that the Almighty made to him the magnificent and pregnant promise : " And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and thy

seed after thee." We know, accordingly, that Abram was justified many years anterior to the period when he was called to so se- vere and excruciating a trial of his faith, as the immolation of his only and beloved son on the altar. And if it really was true that this pious action, contributed in the remotest degree to his justification before God, or was a joint condition of it, we would ask, with what regard to truth or consistency could James affirm, as he has done in the very next verse, that Abram's faith was the simple and exclusive ground of his forgive- ness and reconciliation : " he believed in God," says he, " and it was imputed unto him for righteousness," or rather for justifi- cation. And, from this quotation, it is made manifest, that if objectors will still advance their cavils and insinuations—still maintain that the two Apostles are at a great remove from each other, and that there is discord or division betwixt them ; they will just find it to be as difficult a task to make James consistent with himself, to keep him from contradicting himself, as they appear to feel in reconciling his theory of justifi- cation with that of St. Paul ; for it is clear as demonstration, that both quote the very same passage of Scripture, in elucidation of the different positions they respectively take up ; that they arraign not, nor controvert one another's statements ; but both concur in establishing, as the occasion requires, that a man is in one sense justified without works, and, in another sense, is justified by works ; while both refer to the case of Abram, in proof that the rare and admirable obedience of the Patriarch, in such an af- fecting juncture, though it could not become a warrant or claim to his being admitted to the illustrious relationship of the friend of God, nevertheless declared him to be so ; and though the unreserved devotedness he evinced, and the unrivalled works he per- formed, could never constitute the righte- ousness, by virtue of which he obtained for- giveness with the Eternal Lawgiver, yet did they bear noble testimony to the fact of his being a true believer, the beloved of God, and " an heir of the promises."

We have now, my friends, finished the examination of a very important subject ; and the practical question which, in conclu- sion, we would wish to urge home, and to engrave upon your consciences, is, Have you realized in your own experience, a be- lief and personal interest in this cardinal article of christian faith, so pregnant with

glory to God and consolation to man? Have you felt yourselves reduced to the condition of desolate, condemned, perishing culprits; and have you disclaimed all pretensions to merit or virtue of your own; have you relinquished every plea of self-righteousness; and have you regarded the most estimable of your natural accomplishments, the most reputable of your mental endowments, and the most splendid of your moral attainments as of no higher value than filthy rags? Have you transferred your only and entire dependence to the Son of God? Have you built on no other foundation than his infinitely meritorious sufferings? Have you bowed supremely to his great vicarious oblation as the sole and infallible basis of your deliverance from impending wrath and condemnation? Have all the lineaments and characteristics of the new spiritual creature been brought out into vivid and conspicuous manifestation upon your persons and history? Can you show proof of the nobility of your heavenly extraction, the pre-eminence of your spiritual privileges, and the grandeur of your moral destination? Have you drank deep into the divine and purifying influences of the Eternal Spirit; have all the powers and affections of your soul been baptized with supernatural grace; is it an atmosphere of prayer and sacredness in which you breathe; and are you walking in an element of purity and communion with God? Do your deportment and conduct coincide in all their details with the port and bearing of the true disciples of Jesus; and have you so excelled in the attainments of the new man; and have you been distinguished by such piety and deeds of holiness as will carry evidence demonstrative of your vital union to Christ Jesus, and personal participation in all the ineffable and glorious fruits of his mediation, as well as stand the scrutiny of the judgment tribunal; which will attest your profession and faith to have been genuine before an assembled world, and so draw forth from the Mediator the tribute of cordial acclaim and approbation, "Well done good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord?" If this be the case, then is your spiritual security inviolable—your happiness perfect—your treasures everlasting; then is the full and overflowing fountain of the Christian yours—his pardon yours—his peace yours—his abundant and inexhaustible fruition yours. Receive then our best congratulations, for to you have been discerned the noblest honours, on you have been

lavished the sublimest distinctness; for you glory is preparing its most splendid triumphs, heaven its choicest raptures, and immortality its brightest crowns.

To the thoughtless and unconverted, who are living as if they were neither reasonable nor accountable agents—with no soul to be saved or lost, no Redeemer to embrace or reject, no judgment bar to stand before, and no eternity in whose ecstacies or agonies to mingle—we would address one parting word. So long, my friends, as you continue in your present state of regardlessness and impenitence, you are in a situation of guilt, peril and wretchedness, such as no mind can fathom, and such as no language can portray. You cannot but feel that you are sinners, and you cannot deny the justice of the sentence that has been passed upon you, as lying under that grievous imputation— "The soul that sinneth it shall die!" "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

The question then of infinite moment that presses itself so forcibly and so imperatively upon your immediate consideration is, whether you will now become converts to sound and saving principles; whether by relinquishing a conduct so irrational, fluctuating and dilatory, as that which you have been so long pursuing, and by acceding at once to the proposals of a free and full redemption, establish your spiritual security and happiness upon an impregnable basis, and give to your souls a permanent and satisfying peace; or whether by remaining immovable in your opposition to the only system of means God has ordained for your moral recovery, and by breaking with heaven beyond the hope of reconciliation, you go on to fill up the measure of your guilt and its meed, to lay the foundation of present distress and future distraction, by abundantly deserving them. The option is given you, whether you will now suffer yourselves to be shaken out of this sleep of ignorance and moral insensibility, and be quickened to the enjoyment of the charms of a new and spiritual life, or contentedly abide under the paralyzing influence of this fatal torpor, until the portentous stillness be disturbed, and the enchantment dissolved by the astounding thunder of the Archangel's trump. It remains with yourselves to determine whether, when the voyage of this world is over with you, and you are about to be anchored in the everlasting harbour, you will be found re-

posing in the blissful calm of divine affection, imparadised in the Redeemer's arms, your spirit cheered and illumined by the sunshine of immortal hope, your countenance beaming with that holy radiance and angelic placidity, which the well established assurance of never-ending glory can alone inspire ; your life delightfully melting away into the life of God, and your soul into the ecstacies of God ; or whether you prefer in the fearful hour of mortal agony to be found alone, unpardoned and unsanctified ; without a shield and without a Saviour, either your heart turned to stone, exhibiting a

frightful deadness of moral feeling, or with a conscience inflamed and exasperated, flashing as if with the vividness of burning lightning, awful realizing forebodings of the judgment-seat, and eternity ; with cheeks rigid and lips pale, quivering in the excess of mortal apprehension.

And as the question is of the very first importance and magnitude, let it be immediately determined, and that on the side of faith and elementary repentance ; on the side of duty and self-interest ; on the side of security and glory ; on the side of happiness and immortality.

ACTS OF MERCY ON THE SABBATH DAY ;

A LECTURE DELIVERED IN THE ORIGINAL SECEDERS' CHURCH, RICHMOND STREET,
EDINBURGH,

By the Rev. THOMAS M'CRIE, D.D.,
Author of the *Life of Knox*, *Life of Andrew Melville*, &c. &c.

"And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her : and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath-day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work : in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath-day. The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering ? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath-day ? And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed : and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him." — LUKE xiii. 10—17.

THIS miracle was not wrought by our Lord immediately after the events told in this chapter, or immediately after the recital of the parable of the fig-tree ; nor does the Evangelist mention the particular time, or even the particular place, but tells us in general, that it happened when he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. Jesus, in prophecy, says, " Thy law is within my heart," and one of the commandments of that law is, " Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy. The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." He knew also the close connexion between the sanctification of the Sabbath and the observation of the public ordinances of religion. " Thou shalt keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary : I am the

Lord." These persons do not keep the Sabbath as a day of sacred rest who spend it in idleness, nor do those persons keep it according to God's appointment who, having an opportunity of going up to the house of God, attend merely to the secret and private duties of devotion. Our Lord's example was perfect, and we find him not only in Jerusalem at the solemn feasts, but giving his regular attendance in the synagogue, in that place which was erected in every town for the purpose of public worship and the instruction of the people. We know that on this occasion he was employed in teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. He showed his compassion on the people in the way of delivering them from their spiritual as well as their corpo-

real maladies. Their sinfulness, as well as the various diseases and sicknesses under which they laboured, extorted his sympathy : "Jesus went out and looked upon the multitude, and he had compassion upon them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd, and he opened his mouth and he taught them." "The preacher was wise and he still taught the people knowledge, yea, he gave good heed and sought out, and set in order many proverbs." He was assiduous in the discharge of the duty of public teaching, in proportion to the necessities of the people and the importance of that doctrine which he had received from his Father and was to declare unto men. Hence, in the 40th Psalm, which is prophetical, we find him introduce his diligence and fidelity in the discharge of his prophetical office : "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation : lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart : I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation : I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation." When one, instead of complying with the call of Christ to become his follower, pleaded that he must first go and bury his father, Jesus replied, "Let the dead bury their dead." Go thou preach the gospel. And when Judas, under the pretext of caring for charitable purposes, expressed indignation at the conduct of the woman who poured the box of ointment upon the head of his Master, Jesus replied, "The poor ye have always with you, but me ye have not always." Persons have six days in the week in which they may attend to the wants of the poor or their bodily distresses, in the way of sympathy and relief. The sabbath is not every day, but they may discharge all the duties of the law, and all the duties that charity and kindness require of them. The sick and afflicted may be visited, and relief administered to them in the way of defence and help, and yet they may not be negligent of the duties of private and public worship. Without interrupting the public services of the day, and without neglecting to preach to the people on the occasion when they were met together, our Lord found an opportunity to perform a miracle of mercy in the way of relieving a person of a bodily malady.

"And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and

was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself."

It is said she had a "spirit of infirmity." It was a real bodily complaint that this poor female laboured under. This had weakened her frame—had bowed her under it to such a degree that she could not lift herself up ; she could not do it without great pain, or probably it was beyond her power to do it at all. God made the body of man erect, as an index that his mind should rise upward, and in order to distinguish him from the beasts of the field, whose bodies are prone, and which look down to the ground. But sin, which has introduced the greatest disorder into our world, and inflicted many maladies, of a bodily as well as of a spiritual kind, upon the human race, has in this way inverted the order of nature, and thus brought man in his outward appearance to a resemblance with the beasts. This, although a real bodily malady, was however not one of an ordinary kind. It is said that a spirit of infirmity, for maladies are called infirmities in the Bible, had been brought on her by the despite of the evil spirit. Accordingly, we are told, in a following part of the narrative, that Satan had bound her, and she was loosed by Christ from the chain of the devil. God, intending to confirm the gospel by miraculous works, in contravention to, or in suspension of, the ordinary laws of nature, and Jesus having come into the world for the sake of destroying the spiritual empire of the devil, it was wisely permitted that that evil spirit should exert his power, and especially at that period, on the bodies of men ; and if we admit of the existence and agency of evil spirits at all, and none we believe that reverences the word of God will refuse this admission, we cannot think it more unreasonable that the devil should exert a power in the way of inflicting bodily malady upon men, than that men should suffer from the hand of a tyrant, as the Galileans did, referred to in this chapter, or should be carried away by an earthquake, or by a stroke of lightning. The devil is said to have the power of death, and he may, by the permission of God, have the power of disease also, to a certain extent. It does not however follow from this, that this woman was a slave of the devil, in the truest sense of the expression. She might, like Job, be given up to the power of the wicked one, so far as related to her body, and yet at the same

time she might be a child of God, and her soul and spirit might be free from the wicked one. It no more followeth, because Satan bowed her with a bodily infirmity, that she was one of his children than that these persons who had perished by the fall of the tower of Siloam were greater sinners than the rest of men, or that they were even in the sight of God ungodly persons. It is a presumption in favour of this woman that she was present in one of the synagogues on the sabbath-day, not for the purpose of interrupting the worship, as some of those who are under the power of Satan do, but to all appearance engaging in the services of religion, with the same outward decorum and attention as others, and probably having her eye fixed, so far as she was capable of it, upon the great preacher of righteousness. This woman was not ashamed to come to a worshipping assembly, although her body was distorted by disease, and her appearance of such a kind as to call the attention of others, for there are persons who labour under infirmities of a less palpable kind, and who, on account of very slender infirmities, absent themselves from the house of God. It does not appear that she came on the present occasion for the purpose of obtaining a cure. It was a spirit of infirmity that she laboured under; probably it was not attended with pain, or at least, with excruciating pain, or she might think it presumptuous in her, and indicating an impatient spirit, if she wanted in the way of miracle, the removal of this tolerable malady. She was seeking the health of her soul at this time, not the health of her body, and her experience confirms the declaration of encouragement held out by our Lord: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added to you." When we pray in public, we should be more anxious to obtain spiritual blessings, the

pardon of our sins, the strengthening of our hearts against temptation, direction in the path of duty, and the advancement of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, than to obtain long life, health or prosperity in this world. There is but one petition in our Lord's prayer that relates to the things of this world. We are told that when Jesus saw her he called her to him, or he addressed her, as the words may be read, and said unto her, "Woman thou art loosed from thine infirmity." No doubt such an intimation as this would be as surprising to the person to whom it was addressed, as it was to the rest that were present. She was expecting nothing of this kind, and she might probably be disposed at first to look to the people, and then to cast an eye of incredulity at the speaker. Probably, however, the words ought to be translated, Woman, be thou loosed from thine infirmity. There was a distinction in our Lord's miracles, from those wrought by the Prophets under the Old Testament, and by the Apostles afterwards, in the name of their Master. The former of them performed their cures in the name of God, and the Apostles used the name of Jesus: "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Our Lord Jesus continually wrought his miracles in his own name. The Prophets were accustomed to say, "Thus saith the Lord." Jesus' introduction was, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." He spake as one having authority, and not as the Scribes. His miracles were wrought in a similar distinguishing character. He did not say, In the name of my Father, woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity; but, "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity." Rise up and be erect, and in order to confirm her faith, and still more to call the attention of those that were present to the cure, he lays his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

(To be concluded in our next.)

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To whom all Communications should be addressed.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 15TH FEBRUARY, 1834.

SERMON by the Rev. JAMES BEGG, M.A., Paisley.
SERMON by the Rev. JOHN SOMERVILLE, D.D., Currie.

| Price :

ACTS OF MERCY ON THE SABBATH DAY ;

A Lecture delivered by the Rev. THOMAS M'CRIE, D.D.—Concluded.

THOUGH this cure was not of so remarkable a kind, as many others our Lord wrought upon persons that laboured under maladies of a painful and mortal nature ; yet, when we consider all the circumstances, it was no less a proof of divine power. The disorder of this woman, of whatever particular kind we might suppose it to be, was of an inveterate kind ; one of those infirmities with which persons lay their account to go to their graves. Physicians do not think of applying remedies after a disorder of this nature has been confirmed during the existence of a number of years, and yet our Lord Jesus Christ, by a word, accompanied with a touch, removed the malady. The woman stood up straight, and she was so sensible of the divine hand that had wrought the cure, that we are told she glorified God. She praised God for her deliverance in the midst of all his enemies.

We have already seen, that our Lord was strict in the particular regard that he paid to the Sabbath, and to the ordinances of God's worship in public ; and yet we find him on the present occasion severely blamed, by a person of high rank in the synagogue, for the cure that he had wrought at that time. It might have been supposed, that the evidence of a divine power in healing the woman, the suddenness with which the cure was effected, and the compassion that had been shown to the individual, would have suppressed any surmises that an individual might have introduced about the

propriety of the deed. But we are told by the Evangelist, that it caused great offence among the rulers of the synagogue, and especially the chief person among them.

“ The ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath-day.”

The Jewish synagogue had a certain number of persons set over it, who had the management of its affairs, the direction of the worship of God, and the preserving of public order, who went by the name of rulers of the synagogue ; and there was one person who acted as a president or chief among them, and he had the name of the ruler of the synagogue. We often find persons mentioned as rulers of the synagogue. For example, he was a ruler of the synagogue whose daughter was cured by our Lord ; but the person here is called not a ruler, but *the ruler of the synagogue*. He was filled with indignation at our Lord, having, as he alleged, broken the Sabbath-day. He was not bold enough to reprove him who had just performed the miracle, but he addressed himself to the people, who, perhaps, were gathering around the woman, and expressing their astonishment and delight at the cure. He said to them in anger,

“ There are six days on which men ought to work ; in them, therefore, come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath-day.”

Just as if it had been an ordinary cure

that had been effected at that time. Our Lord's miracles had become, says one, so cheap in the eyes of these men and of their brethren, that they did not reflect that this was not to be expected on every day of the week, and that the Spirit of the Lord is sovereign, even when it acts by a distinguished messenger from heaven. Our Lord severely reprobated the hypocrisy of this man in the answer that he gave to him. "The Lord then answered him and said, Thou hypocrite." He knew the hearts of all men, and was well aware that what had been spoken by the ruler of the synagogue did not really proceed from zeal for the house of God, although a zeal that was accompanied by much ignorance, but proceeded from envy at the miracles our Lord had wrought, as if he had drawn more disciples to him than he had hitherto done; and therefore he calls him a hypocrite, a false pretender to piety, and convicted him of hypocrisy, at the same time that he questioned him on the curing of this woman. He appealed to a common custom among the Jews, which showed that they did not understand the law in the strict sense which was implied in the censure, that the ruler of the synagogue had now pronounced on the conduct of our Lord.

He said, "Doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?"

Our Lord selects this instance of an ox or an ass, because these were creatures of less value, and intimates, that while they did not scruple to spend a part of the sabbath in going to their stables, and unloosing their cattle, and carefully leading them away to the well, which, perhaps, was at a considerable distance from their dwelling, for the purpose of relieving their wants and affording them drink; therefore, surely, it could not be unlawful to perform a cure upon a fellow-creature. Works of necessity and mercy were excepted under the Mosaic law, as well as under the Christian, in the observance of the day of sacred rest. And notice how particularly he applies the case, that was now before him: "And," says he,

if you do this, ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, being your sister, and one in whom Satan has found an advantage, "whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath-day?"

The circumstance of the period of time

during which this woman had remained under this spirit of infirmity, is not passed over as if a light matter by our Lord:

"Whom Satan hath bound," says he, "lo, these eighteen years."

This was an appeal to them, and contained in it a sharp reproof. Which of you, provided you had laboured under an afflicting malady even for a shorter period of time, for a few years, for one year, for a few months, or a few days, would not have rejoiced in being delivered from it, even on the Sabbath-day? As our Lord said on another occasion, "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath-day;" that is, to do acts of kindness and compassion to our fellow-creatures. We are told of the effect that this reproof had on two classes of persons.

"And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed."

It is seldom that one person will rise up, especially in a public assembly, and bring a charge against a respectable individual, if he is not conscious of having a backing. The ruler of the synagogue knew that his brethren were of the same mind with himself—that they laboured under the same prejudices against our Lord, and he probably guessed that they had disciples among the multitude actuated by similar sentiments. But they felt themselves abashed when our Lord, in such a plain manner, showed that his conduct was agreeable to the spirit of the law—that what he had done was not so palpable a deviation even from the letter or strict command as that which they were accustomed to do even on the Sabbath. They were not convicted so as to be humbled, but they were abashed, their countenances fell, they turned away; and, on the other hand, all the people, that is the multitude, the audience in general, rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him. It is said that they were pleased. It is not an uncommon thing to find inferiors pleased and delighted, when their superiors are put to confusion, when their teachers are silenced. But the audience, upon the present occasion, rejoiced, for all the glorious things that Jesus had done, for this miracle that he had wrought, and for all the other miracles they had seen, and which were of the same stamp with this. But O! my brethren, they might rejoice, and rejoice at the glorious things that Jesus had done, and yet they might not believe on him! You are not to suppose that a cure had been wrought on their minds, and that they were now dif-

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ferent persons from what they had been when Jesus had spoken to them, in language somewhat similar to that used on the present occasion to the Ruler of the Synagogue : " Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth ; but how is it that ye do not discern this time ? " They gloried in the miracles that our Lord Jesus Christ wrought, because they were astonishing things ; they excited wonder in their minds ; and thus they led them to conclude, that this must be some great person, perhaps the Messiah, and they followed him as those did who had eaten of the miraculous feast in the wilderness : " Ye follow me, not

because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were satisfied." Let us take care lest we deceive ourselves by our regular attendance on divine ordinances, by the decent attention we give to the Word of God, and other exercises of religioia ; because, after all, we may be strangers to the true faith of the Gospel, and the genuine worship of the Most High. " Verily, verily, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not inherit the kingdom of God." " Except a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." " Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."*

THE TRANSFIGURATION : OR MOSES, ELIAS, AND CHRIST UPON MOUNT TABOR ;

A COMMUNION SERMON,

By the Rev. JAMES BEGG, M.A.,

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"And behold there talked with him two men which were Moses and Elias ; who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."

—LUKE ix. 30, 31.

The transfiguration of Jesus Christ was intended, we apprehend, to teach men clearly the doctrine of his supreme Divinity. This is the inference deduced from that amazing scene by the apostle Peter. " We have not followed cunningly-devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus, but were eye-witnesses of his Majesty, when there came such a voice from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

I have often directed your attention to the vast importance of this doctrine. I regard it not merely as a most amazing truth—that the very Being who spake all things into existence, has walked in human nature upon this earth on which we tread—it forms the pledge of our eternal safety. If the God who made the heavens be on our side, who shall be against us ? If he is resolved to save, who created this vast universe, not ceasing till " the morning stars sung together, and the sons of God shouted for joy," without doubt he is able to destroy all our spiritual foes—to accomplish all the purposes of his grace—carry forward to his glorious work, and present benevolence :

the redeemed and glorious creation perfect in the view of all the universe, as he did before this vast yet fair and harmonious assemblage of worlds.

Therefore it was that such care was taken that this preliminary truth should be fully established. It was not enough that the prophets had spoken in exalted terms of the surpassing glories of a coming age, when the brightest inhabitant of heaven should become a sojourner in this distant dreary world. It was not enough that a star from heaven should announce to the thoughtless inhabitants of earth his coming, and that the hosts of heaven should, in songs of praise, proclaim his birth on the plains of Bethlehem. Men were apt to forget when they beheld merely a lowly son of Adam—nay, a desolate and houseless wanderer, that they beheld that glorious Being whom unnumbered angels had for innumerable ages adored in heaven—his very disciples knew not the dignity of their Master : and, therefore, he was not merely continually putting forth his omnipotent power, displaying his unsearchable wisdom, manifesting the most strange and unheard of

* For the Lecture and Sermon which preceded this Lecture, see Nos. 92 and 93, and pp. 141 and 1

libly on their minds, and make it plain to all future generations, he took with him three chosen disciples, and before their eyes threw off his disguise ; and, instead of his glory shining in rays merely through the chinks of that covering of flesh with which he was clothed, that covering itself was removed, and his whole glory blazed forth as it does from that glorious throne on which he shall sit throughout eternal ages.

It belongs to us rather to learn the lessons which this glorious scene is fitted to teach, than to attempt to describe its glory. The inspired writer has left nothing for us to do but wonder and adore. He has set before us our great Redeemer lifted up upon a lofty mountain apart, surrounded by the representatives of both worlds—the Church on earth—the Church in heaven—engaged in deep converse on the most important event which shall ever be recorded in the annals of time. Man shall never understand what is meant by this glorious transfiguration, till this earthly tabernacle shall have fallen into dust, and our emancipated spirits are conducted by the angel of God into his eternal presence-chamber, where we shall behold sights unutterable—seeing the resplendent majesty of God and all his bright spirits face to face—knowing as we are known—when eternity shall shed its full lustre of illustration on all the records of time.

Still there are many most important truths to be learned from this wonderful display of glory. Let us not suppose, for example, as we are apt to do, that this was the most astonishing event in our Saviour's history on earth. It was in truth the least wonderful. It was far more astonishing that his glory should have been obscured so long—that it should have been obscured at all. For four thousand years previous to his coming into our world, he had stood in glory behind the screen which separated the eternal world from the view of mortals, arrayed in the very same majesty—from eternal ages before the foundations of earth were laid he had been the same glorious Being—during all the eternity that is to come from the time that he went up amidst the gaze of his disciples he will still be the object of all worship, the glorious Ruler of the universe. And, therefore, though viewing our Saviour's history merely from his cradle to his grave, the amazing glory with which he stood clothed upon Mount Tabor

may fill us with wonder ; viewing that history from eternity to eternity, it seems almost the only hour of his brief life on earth, during which he stood forth before the eyes of men in his true character, divested of all disguise. It is not wonderful that the king of vast dominions should ascend the throne seize the sceptre and the crown, and be surrounded with courtiers arrayed ; but it is wonderful to behold that prince, laying aside these insignia of royalty, travelling in disguise, exile, poverty in a dark, distant, rebellious province of his dominions, buffeted and reviled by his own subjects whom he came to pity and to save. And it is only because we do not seriously stand still and reflect upon the history of Christ as recorded in the Sacred Volume—upon the amazing stoop which he is said to have made, that we perceive not at once that his short life of humiliation was only a momentary eclipse through which the struggling rays of Divinity broke forth upon Mount Tabor, of a race of glory which had no beginning, and which is destined never to have an end.

But whilst the transfiguration of Christ was a display of the glory which our Saviour always had and shall enjoy throughout all eternity, the appearance of his companions, and the subject of their conversation, may teach us some other deeply interesting and important lessons suited to our present circumstances. His companions were Moses and Elias, both then glorified spirits, who stood before the eyes of the disciples in their distinct personalities. One is apt to wonder, in reflecting upon the scenes of eternity, whether all the souls of men that have gone up to the courts of heaven during the ages that are past, shall be distinct from, and recognised by each other, amidst the mighty throng of angels ; whether those who have gone down to the regions of despair, will recognise, amongst the vast crowd, their companions in wickedness ; whether exalted friendships will hold on their endless uninterrupted course in heaven ; whether deep-rooted dislike will continue to boil and fill with eternal wretchedness the miserable sons of perdition ? Now, undoubtedly, the glimpse which this and other passages of Scripture give us into the invisible world, proves that all this will be the case. No matter that we cannot understand how spirits can stand apart from each other and be stamped with marks of individuality. We know that all angels are distin-

so that Michael is not confounded with Gabriel, and that at length when the trumpet shall sound, Christ will descend with a whole crowd of spirits all distinct, and all hastening to join those bodies that are springing from the dust of the earth; and here upon Mount Tabor we behold two of the sons of men, after having gone up for hundreds of years to their eternal rest, and mingling so long with the crowds of spirits in the upper sanctuary, not merely fresh in the bloom of immortality, but standing with all their marks of identity before our eyes, as distinct as when before they sojourned in the land of Judea. And, therefore, when any of your friends have put off this earthly tabernacle—fled away into the eternal world, think not that they are lost amidst the crowd of spirits, or that when you pass the limit which bounds our present views, and when your spirit shall gaze abroad for the first time on all the wonders which are within the veil, you will not recognise at once all that ye knew on earth, and be recognised by them. That spirit which you imagine to be viewless as the wind, will have some distinct marks of identity which spirits can discern; and you, and I, and all men will find ourselves as distinct objects of attention and interest in heaven or in the regions of woe, as if we were the only visitants that had ever penetrated into the glory of the one, or descended amidst the gloomy prisoners to be found in the other.

This is not a mere curious speculation; it is fitted powerfully to stimulate to duty, awfully to deter from sin. There is nothing, for example, more sweet on earth than friendship; it is long since our Maker declared that it was not good for man to be alone; and our experience teaches us that the hours of life would often move slowly and heavily on, had we no one in whom we could with confidence trust—to whom we could reveal our griefs, and in whose ear pour the tale of our secret joys and miseries. And it must be an inspiring thought that, though all these dear ties must be harshly broken up by the ruthless hand of death, if they are united by the more sacred tie of Christianity, when we have crossed the eternal mountains, and reached the glorious paradise of God, they shall be joined again by a tie which shall never be dissolved, and purified and made more glorious than eye hath seen, or ear heard, or than it hath entered into the heart of man to conceive.

In heaven there will be the welcome of friends—the rapturous meeting with those glorious men whose names stand prominent in the calendar of saints—the eternal joys of a heavenly companionship, which no grief shall cloud, no pain interrupt, no death destroy, amidst the delights of the glorious paradise of God. But there will also be the fearful meeting of sinners—the dread recoil of those who have taught each other to sin, and whose ruined souls will haunt them with eternal terror in the shades below. “Let sinners in Zion be afraid, let trembling seize the hypocrites.”

But why was it that two glorified spirits came down to meet the Saviour of the world upon this mountain? It was to indicate the deep interest which stirred and agitated all heaven in that amazing event which was soon to take place on Calvary, and to rebuke the awful indifference which reigned in Judea, and over all the earth. If we cast our eyes downwards from gazing upon Mount Tabor to the land of Canaan, the villages there scattered to and fro upon its surface, we see the most marked ignorance of that amazing tragedy which was now hastening to a close. The merchant was continuing his traffic, the labourer his toil, the high priest, with all his attendants, and arrayed in his glorious garments, was continuing to slay the sacrifices, to carry their blood within the veil, ignorant that the great sacrifice had come, and that the whole of these emblems were about to vanish for ever away. Even the disciples, left at the base of the mountain, had not penetrated the meaning of that strange drama, in which they themselves were actors; whilst those who had gone up, and who stood in the presence of these heavenly visitors, only gazed with wonder, and spoke what they themselves did not understand. Therefore these glorious worthies had come down to manifest the deep interest which all heaven felt in an event now nearly arrived, for which all the saints had longed for ages, in the faith of which they all had died, and towards which their whole gaze was still directed. Nothing has been ever more remarkable than the striking contrast which has always existed between the displays of feeling on earth and in heaven. Men have always been steeped in profound security respecting the plans of God, respecting the transactions of heaven above, and hell beneath, nay, those events in the spiritual world which have been taking place

very midst of them, and before their eyes ; requiring that angels ever pure and happy, and spirits of men, in the regions of blessedness, beyond the possibility of change, should come down, as in the case before us, to awake them from their lethargy to consider the glories of a salvation, whose blessings were designed for them alone.

But why was it that all the spirits in heaven did not come down to meet upon this mountain our glorious Saviour ? or if only a deputation must be sent, why did Abraham not come—the friend of God ? or Joshua, who led the people into the promised land ? or Caleb, who followed God fully ? or Samuel, for whom all Israel mourned when he died ? or David, the sweet singer of Israel, whose harp had long before resounded the praises of the Messiah—the man after God's own heart ? or Isaiah, who described in such glowing terms the glories of the coming age ? or the plaintive Jeremiah, who longed so eagerly that the transgressions of Judah might cease, and that the glory of the latter day might shed its radiance on fallen and desolate Jerusalem ? If a deputation of the heavenly company must descend to earth to greet the Saviour of the world, why did these remain in heaven, and were Moses and Elias alone sent down ?

A very little consideration will convince us that these men, though in some respects less distinguished than many of the rest, stood distinguished far above them all by their peculiar and exalted offices. The whole Old Testament is divided into two parts—the Law and the Prophets. “The law and the prophets were until John ; from this time the kingdom of God is preached.” That whole economy, therefore, with all that was done and said under it, may be ranked under these two heads ; whilst the New Testament is ranked under one—the everlasting gospel revealed in all its clearness to men of every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, by Jesus Christ and his Apostles. Now, upon Mount Tabor we have the representatives of all the three. The whole line of priests and ceremonies may be traced up to Moses—the whole train of prophets to Elias ; for, in speaking of John, who arose only in the spirit and power of Elias, it is declared that a greater prophet than he had not risen amongst all those born of women ; whilst, in Christ Jesus, we have the author and finisher of our faith—the beginning and the ending of

the plan of divine love. We have therefore the most interesting group, by far, that could possibly have assembled, the most fitted to reflect light on the pages of inspiration.

Most interesting it must be to know, and to ponder well the subject of their conversation, for we must hold that all the priests are there in the person of Moses—that all the prophets are there in the person of Elias—that all the Apostles are there in the person of their great Master. It was therefore a full muster of the Church of God in all its parts, and under both economies—in earth and in heaven—a representation of the sentiments of all who were redeemed, or who shall be redeemed through everlasting ages. What then is the subject of their discourse ? “They spake of Christ's decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.”

From this we are to learn the deeply interesting lesson, that the object of God, from the foundation of the world, has been to set forth the atonement of Jesus Christ. As is to confute all those blind and foolish high priests, who were continually offering sacrifices, the meaning of which they could not understand ; as if to cover with eternal confusion all those mad interpreters who have laboured so long to darken the counsel of God, and to heap up useless learning for the purpose of proving that the strange rites of the Jewish ritual had no reference to Christ's atonement, we have Moses himself brought down from heaven, after he had gone up for two thousand years, and, from a mountain in Judea, pointing to the cross of Christ as that which explained all the strange ceremonies, the apparent enigmas of his mysterious law. As if to confound all those foolish students of sacred prophecy, who then laboured to darken counsel by words without knowledge, and who, in after ages, should expend their cumbrous erudition in labouring to rob man of his only hope, and to prove that no atonement is spoken of by the prophets of God ; we find Elias, the chief of all the train, coming down from his eternal rest, that he might at once set aside all these dreamers, and declare that the cross, round which you are this day to muster, formed on earth the subject of all his preaching, and now in heaven the foundation of all his joy. And, as if to preclude the possibility of those awful perversions of the false seducers who afterwards should arise—even denying the Lord that bought them—and endeavouring to banish out of

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the world the recollection of that death by which alone men can be saved, even at the time when they presumptuously call themselves the disciples of Jesus ; we have our Saviour himself openly disowning such, and setting forth the decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem, as the great event in his history on earth fitted to inspire sinners with courage and joy. The great lesson, then, which we are to learn from the words of the text, is, that the death of Christ is that event which gives meaning to the whole Old Testament economy, to all the predictions of the prophets—the great centre of all revelation, from which all the light of Scripture radiates.

This is undoubtedly a most important truth, and one which it becomes us, especially on this day, to bear constantly in mind. Let us shortly examine its several parts. With regard to the economy of Moses it was evidently only a full development of the promise made to Abraham ; and every one who will consider the temple of Jerusalem, its priests, its washings, the time of offering its sacrifices, the various ceremonies with which these were accompanied, especially that blood which was constantly shed, and without which no man could approach unto God in peace—comparing them all with the full disclosure made of Christ, under the New Testament, will see the exact amazing accordance, and the truth of the statement, “that the Apostles spake none other things than those which Moses declared should come, that Christ should suffer” to secure salvation to man.

We cannot imagine what idea any man can entertain of God, who can for an instant dream that it was otherwise. Where could the advantage be of slaying so many thousands of innocent creatures ? these were God’s property, and the slaying of them must have been only an aggravation of man’s offence had this not been appointed to direct the thoughts of the Jews forward to the sacrifice of Christ. Besides, where could be the favour displayed to the Jewish nation in bringing them down to Egyptian bondage—in detaining them for so many years in the great, barren, terrible, wilderness of Arabia—in loading them with a burden of ceremonies which they were almost unable to bear, and forcing them to slay their flocks, in sacrifice, unless under all this a deep and important meaning was conveyed, hid from the inhabitants of other lands—unless all this was fitted to point to

that atonement which would blot out the memory of their sins, and secure their reception into everlasting habitations ? When viewed in this light all is consistent, all is glorious : otherwise it is a mere unmeaning riddle.

And let no one ask why God permitted this long economy to elapse before the coming of the Great Redeemer. We can see many important purposes which this was fitted to serve. It taught men “by its awful consequences, how evil and how bitter sin was.” It exercised the faith of the ancient saints in the truth of God’s promise, and it was consistent with all the other works of the Almighty. When he created the world, darkness brooded at first over the face of the deep, then there was the dim and struggling twilight, and, last of all, he placed the sun in the heavens, that from it might proceed the full blaze of noon-day splendour ; so, from the time of the Fall, God had thoughts of love towards men, and never left them without a witness of this. He set up a school in Judea ; and by pictures and emblems he trained up a family for heaven—making the light which first glimmered in paradise gradually become brighter and the truth clearer—making star after star arise upon the world which had become overspread with darkness, until at last the Sun of righteousness arose, with healing under his wings. And, “as Noah opened the window of the ark, sent out first one messenger, then another, and at last came forth himself upon the surface of the earth, which had just emerged from the waters of the deluge—so Christ sent messenger after messenger, and set up representation after representation, until he himself shook all nations, and suddenly came to His temple.”

The object of the whole economy of Moses was to thrust the truths of Christianity upon the human mind, through the medium of all the senses. It is impossible to understand it, unless we have this in view. And we are not to suppose that it is now incapable of contributing to our instruction. The veil of the temple, with “all its figures of strange emblazonry, exhibits still the curious workmanship of Israel’s God.” The pictures used in the Jewish school are still in existence, and form a great gallery of figures of strange device, in which every Christian would do well to be often found, pondering in solemn thought ; and around which, as he casts his eyes, he may behold portrayed all the articles of his creed. The

line of priests terminated in Christ the great High Priest of our profession—the long line of sacrifices in Christ, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

But the whole race represented by Elias, equally pointed to the decease which Christ accomplished at Jerusalem. It is no part of our intention to quote at present the various prophetic writers who spoke expressly of Christ Jesus and his great atonement—to remind you how one declares that he was to be wounded for man's transgressions, and bruised for his iniquities—another, that the Messiah was to be cut off, but not for himself. The whole writings of the Old Testament not merely point forward to Christ Jesus as a dying Saviour, but do so with rapture, and exhaust every term of praise, and every figure, whereby his glory may be illustrated. “Thou art fairer than the children of men ; grace is poured into thy lips : therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness : therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory

s, whereby they have made thee glad.

daughters were among thy honourable women : upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.” “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah ? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength ?” Every object in the world around is called in to illustrate the glory of the coming Saviour—the exalted friend of man ; the whole gorgeousness of eastern imagery is employed in sounding his praise. The kings of the earth and its chief princes are set forth as nothing in comparison of him. The glorious sun which enlightens all the world, wine that gladdens the heart of man, bread that strengtheneth him, the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valley, rivers of water in a dry place, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land—these are some of the figures by which the Saviour of the world was pointed out and recommended by Old Testament prophets. His name is said to be like ointment poured forth ; himself is said to be as the apple tree among the trees of the wood ; he is glorious as the curtains of Solomon, beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, perfumed with myrrh, and frankincense, and all the powders of the merchant, yea, he is declared to be the

chief amongst ten thousand, and altogether lovely. The man who can read the works of all the prophets, without seeing Jesus Christ set forth in all his glory, dying, rising, ascending, as the Saviour of sinners, must be wilfully blind ; for this is the truth which he has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began ; and they all inquired and searched diligently ; searching what, and what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

I suppose it will be unnecessary to dwell upon the truth—the only other embodied in this verse—that the decease which Christ accomplished at Jerusalem, was the object to secure which he descended to this earth at all. It had been recorded in heaven, that, without shedding blood of infinite value, there could be no remission of sins ; and Christ assumed our nature, that he might have somewhat to offer. Could we suppose that this death had not taken place, Moses and Elias, and all the redeemed, must have even then been driven out of heaven ; for they had entered there only because of the coming propitiation, in which they all believed. They entered the inheritance before the price was paid ; because it had been decreed by God, that it would be sufficient to satisfy every claim.

And now that the Old Testament dispensation was about to vanish away—that types and prophets were no longer necessary—that the age of full revelation began to dawn—we find our Saviour announcing this as the grand truth of all, that as Moses had lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of Man was to be lifted up, that “whosoever believed on him might not perish, but have everlasting life.”

The decease which Christ accomplished at Jerusalem, which you are this day to commemorate, was the most amazing event in the annals of time. Whether you think of its own mysterious nature—the eternal God in human nature enduring the penalty of his own violated law—the conflicting attributes overcome by it—the innumerable multitudes to be saved by it from eternal misery, and crowned with inconceivable endless glory—the myriads to be punished for ever for despising it—the thousands that looked forward to it with interest from the foundation of the world—the intense interest which

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it excited amongst angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, when it actually happened, nay, amongst all the spirits of darkness—the innumerable multitudes that have in all ages been spreading the glory of it abroad, and are at this day speaking of its wonders in all languages, amidst all ranks of men, in all circumstances, in all the earth—the myriads of communion tables that have been spread in honour of it, and the certainty that it will be celebrated till the end of time, till Christ shake down and remove all the ordinances of the Christian Church, and all his purposes be accomplished, all his enemies swallowed up in an eternal victory ; these and many other considerations point it out as the most extraordinary event in the records of the universe.

The recollection of it should fill us all with holy joy and praise. If there are any in this assembly who feel no interest in this death, and who do not daily give thanks to God, because it took place, they must look forward to a fearful reckoning on the day of judgment. To be without holiness, and to stand exposed to the eternal indignation of God, is fearful ; but to feel no interest in the means by which this sad defect is to be supplied, and these awful evils averted, this marks out a hardened reprobate. To be houseless and unsheltered, exposed to all the storms of heaven, is lamentable ; but to see such a one refuse, turn obstinately away from a refuge when presented, this indicates deep-daring infatuation. To be blind, is a fearful calamity, and fills beholders with pity ; but if we obstinately shut our eyes against the light of everlasting truth, we deserve to stumble, and fall, and be bruised, and snared, and taken. To be enemies of God in our minds, and by wicked works, and hasting on to eternal ruin, that is a fearful state ; but when Christ comes down, and endures our punishment, and sets before us a full and free redemption ; when he sends messengers to all our dwellings, to speak to us of the decease which he accomplished at Jerusa-

lem—to warn, to exhort, to pray, to implore us to be reconciled to God—to turn away those messengers, and disuse those warnings, is the highway to everlasting ruin ; and if such continue to be the case with any soul in this assembly, as the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, omnipotence itself cannot save that soul ; for there is only one fountain in the universe, in which a sinner can wash, and from that fountain the man turns stubbornly away—only one gate by which to enter the realms of glory, and from that gate the poor deluded sinner is flying away.

Who, then, amongst you is the wise merchant that can esteem the great Redeemer, this pearl of great price ? Who amongst you are employed in the world as the saints are in heaven, rejoicing in a crucified Saviour ? Let such come up to a communion table, and behold again this great sight—the Lamb of God. Christ has done all, suffered all, taken all your infirmities, finished the great work of redemption for you. Let him be the joy and the rejoicing of your hearts. If he be your shepherd, what can you want ? If he be the master of the feast, to whom the universe belongs, shall he not make your table abundant, your cup of prosperity to run over. You are prone to err, he is the way to heaven—to doubt, he is the truth—to faint and die, he is the life, the strength, the everlasting joy of all who trust in him. He died once ; he lives and reigns for evermore ; the keys of hell and of death are his ; pardon, peace, all blessings, are at his command. He hath accomplished a glorious decease ; many saints in heaven are enjoying its blessed fruits ; and if, when seated at His table, you fix your eyes on Calvary, and sincerely implore the forgiveness and grace of the eternal God, your place of defence shall be the munition of rocks ; ye shall see the King in his beauty, and the land that is afar off. “ He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

THE CONSOLATIONS OF THE GOSPEL;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH, FOR THE BENEFIT OF
THE EDINBURGH LYING-IN INSTITUTION,

BY JOHN SOMERVILLE, D.D.,

Minister of Currie.

*ye may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort
wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."—2 COR. i. 4.*

THE relief which the gospel, rightly understood and duly appreciated, brings to mankind, is one of its distinguishing characteristics. It was first announced as good tidings of great joy to all people. Its genuine tendency is to soothe the sorrows, and to alleviate the distresses of men. Various have been the means devised and adopted by mankind, in order to accomplish the same end. Feeling the evils of life, and their own inability to support them, some have endeavoured to supply by reason their want of power, and to show the absurdity of murmuring at that which cannot be mended, and thus have endeavoured to quiet the throbings of misery, not by its removal, but by showing that it cannot be removed—by proving that calamity, in one shape or other, is the unavoidable destiny of man, the very law of his being, and that all mortal creatures are subject to it. They have endeavoured to show, that not to submit to it with composure and resignation is equally unreasonable as it is unavailing. They have therefore called upon us to summon up our native energies to reflect on the advantage of fortitude, and the triumph of conquest; to call to our aid the exercise of patience, to remember that the evil that is severe cannot be lasting, and that the more difficult and arduous the conflict, the greater the honour of resistance, and the more splendid the reward of victory. This is well, so far as it goes, and, in subordination to religion, it ought never to be neglected; for the reflections drawn from such considerations as these can never be considered as commensurate to all the evils of life, yet they may tend to enforce those drawn from a more certain and infallible source, and ought then to lessen, if not to dispel the cloud of misery. Others persuade us to flee from the ills of life, not to reason or philosophy, but to amusements or the tumults of business, and, it may be, to the haunts of dissipation. They think our safety consists

not in opposition but in flight, and that the most successful plan is not to reason with our cares and troubles, but to forget them. But however such dreams as these may tend to soften or palliate our distresses for a while, they will all very soon cease to have any effect, and in cases of severe distress they would be found quite inapplicable. The chamber, and the couch, and the bed of death, admit neither of pleasure nor of business. A man needs something more than the cold maxims of philosophy, or the dissipations of pleasure, or the routine of business, to support his spirits or employ his thoughts, when under the pressure of complicated distress, or complicated sorrow. Instead of alleviating, these remedies sometimes aggravate the evils they are intended to cure. They may alleviate the spirits for a moment, but they are found at last temporary and inefficient; and when we stand most in need, we shall look to them for assistance in vain. If we would wish, in every condition, and at all times, to obtain a shelter from the storms of life, we must seek for it, not in the schools of philosophy, or in scenes of frivolity or false pleasure, but from a higher quarter to which we can always resort, and which is most accessible when we stand most in need. Of such a nature are the hopes and the consolations of the Gospel. Its genius is benign—its spirit is consoling. Christ Jesus was sent to bind up the broken in heart, to comfort all that mourn, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

In further speaking on the present subject, it is proposed, first, to state and illustrate some of the consolations and supports which the Gospel opens up to the distressed mind; and, secondly, to apply the subject with a special reference to the cir-

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circumstances that have called us together this evening.

The first grand source of consolation, then, we may mention, is, that all circumstances, however seemingly fortuitous, however dark, and however are under the direction of a Being of Almighty power, of unerring wisdom, and perfect goodness; who presides over all nature, and who regulates all events, and, with the minutest care and most tender concern, watches over the life of every individual of his great family;—in one word, it is the providence of God developed in the pages of the gospel. To this important fact philosophy tries in vain to give certainty—probability she no doubt gives, and strong probability—but it was reserved for Christianity alone to put the finishing hand to this great doctrine of nature. We are here placed on a theatre where we see innumerable operations going on, and operations of vast extent and prodigious variety, where wisdom, and goodness, and beauty are no doubt general laws; but to our eye jarrings and discords sometimes take place, or, which is the same thing to us, seem to take place, which puzzle our skill and reason, and leave us perplexed and undecided. We are not admitted behind the scene. Effects only are visible to us—the causes of things are wrapt in night: we penetrate not beyond the surface. God is now pleased to conceal himself far from mortal view. He talks no more with his creatures face to face. We believe that he is above us, and around us—that his eye never slumbers, and that his hand is ever busy; but we see him not with our bodily eye, we meet with him not in our solitary walk—no voices are borne to us on the breeze—the heavens open not at our request, it thunders not at that quarter of the heavens where we ejaculate our prayers and look up. We do not, like Moses, now ascend the top of the mountain and take our station on a cliff of the rock, and see the glory of the Lord pass by us. Do what we will, the tranquillity of nature seems to be undisturbed, and general laws seem to hold undisputed sway, and refuse to bend. The chain that connects this world with the next is too fine for our feeble unassisted vision. The top of the ladder on which the angels of God are ever ascending and descending, and keeping the communication open between heaven and earth, is lost in the clouds. We hear not the command given to them,

we see not to what quarter of the world they bend their course to exercise their benign and salutary superintendence. We see not the Almighty rise, as it were, from his throne, and with visible arm conduct all the mighty operations of nature. We see not the hand that directs the wandering meteors, or wheels the silent stars, or spreads the fleecy clouds, or sprinkles the morning dew; that adorns the woods with foliage, that paints the flowers in beauty, the earth in green, and the harvest in gold. The operations of nature, though grand, and regular, and steady, are, nevertheless, still, and quiet, and mysterious. The wheels of the universe move on, but it is in still and awful silence. God dwells in distant and mysterious retirement from his creatures. That God should, in some way or other, govern the world he has created, preside over the destiny of mighty empires, kingdoms and nations, keep the planets in their spheres, is what the imagination of man conceives, and reason acquiesces in; but that God should watch over the life of even the minutest individual, so that, in the language of the Gospel, the very hairs of our head are all numbered, and not a sparrow falls to the ground without the notice of our heavenly Father—this is a doctrine which we could have learned only from a divine source; and it is that alone which, in an hour of anxiety or of danger, can set our minds at rest. Nature throws a veil over many of her most important operations, and thus conceals the seat of her power and the mysteries of her government. She observes a mysterious, and a silent, and stern reserve on most of her important matters. Hence, from the silence observed, and the mystery which oftentimes pervades creation, many of the heathen philosophers deprived it of a governor altogether, and left it to blind chance or ruthless fate. They wrapt up Deity in the exclusive contemplation of His own nature, in indolent repose far from the concerns of men, altogether indifferent to their happiness or misery. They concluded that their prayers never reached his throne, and never called down a blessing, and that every thing, as we have said, was under blind chance or fatal necessity. It is easy to see that such a doctrine struck at once at the root of all permanent and all solid tranquillity. Without a firm and steady belief in the all-wise and benevolent superintendence of the Almighty Parent of the universe, how deplorable is frequently the condition of man! Exposed

as he is to frequent, to innumerable evils and heavy sufferings, ignorant whence they come, and how they should terminate, doomed, it may be, to suffer in silence and solitude, unnoticed and unregarded by any human creature, how very forlorn must his condition be, if he must also be cut off from belief in the superintendence of the great Father of the universe, not knowing where, in an hour of anxiety or of danger, he may turn his wandering steps or his aching eye? It is this that gives to misfortune its sting—that takes away fortitude from a man, and lays his spirits lower than the very dust he treads on. Here then the Gospel comes most seasonably to our aid. Under the belief of the government of God no such complicated distresses are known. Here we learn that God who created still governs the world. In him we live, and move, and have our being: he has appointed all the circumstances of our lot; he knows all the difficulties and struggles we have to endure. We never cease to occupy a place in his thoughts; he watches over all his faithful servants with the vigilance of a Father, and with an eye that slumbereth not nor sleepeth; his government here below, as that in heaven, originates in love, and has our happiness for its object. Our

case is not unknown, nor our troubles unheeded. All things, in the language of Holy Writ, worketh together for good to them that love God. "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." God chasteneth us for our profit, that we may be made partakers of his holiness—that our light afflictions which last but for a moment, may work out for us a far more exceeding even an eternal weight of glory. The sufferings of the present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. Convinced of such doctrines as these, the Christian may meet the evils of life with a smile. They no longer wear that dismal aspect they formerly had. Nature puts on a cheerful appearance; and he considers these as means for turning him to a higher and nobler state of existence when this world and all its cares, and its toils, and its sins, and its sorrows, shall be for ever away. Whatever difficulties may encompass this subject, the Scriptures assure us that futurity will set all to rights—that the end will explain every thing.

(To be concluded in our next.)

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**THE REASONS WHY, AND THE WAY IN WHICH CHRIST'S NAME
IS TO BE PERPETUATED;**

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE SOUTH CHURCH, ABERDEEN,
OF THE LORD'S SUPPER, ON 8TH SEPTEMBER, 1833,

By the Rev. ALEXANDER D. DAVIDSON.

"His name shall endure for ever." —PSALM lxxii. 17.

THERE is a circumstance connected with this psalm, which must invest it with peculiar interest in the view of every believer—that it is the last, in the order of time, of all David's compositions. It corresponds in his history with that part of the First Book of Chronicles, in which we read, that Solomon was placed upon the throne of Israel on account of the advanced age of his father; and it presents to us the prayer which his father offered up to the God of Israel in his behalf. We have David here on the verge of eternity, in that attitude which, of all others, is most becoming in a child of God—presenting his requests to the Almighty, and exercising his faith on the precious promises which he had received himself, and which had been communicated to former generations respecting the Messiah. Let your imagination go back for a moment to the aged saint, as he poured out his soul on this occasion at the throne of grace. He had already received the assurance from on high, that there should never be wanting to him a man to sit on his throne; he had already been told that a son should be raised up to him, whose throne should be established for ever, and he had seen the divine promise in so far verified, that Solomon was peaceably settled in the kingdom: but there seems to be something in his countenance which tells that he understood the messay of God was not to be limited to the communication of earthly blessings; there is something in the

elevated tone to which he rises in the progress of his prayer, which shows us that the Spirit was revealing to him some glimpses of the glory of that successor of his, in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed. His eye passes from the narrow territories over which Solomon was to bear sway, to the boundless dominions which were to own the sway of Messiah, when he says at the 8th verse, "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth;" he turns away from the merciful government which Solomon was to exercise over the poor and needy, to the wonderful interposition of Messiah in behalf of a ruined world, when he says at the 14th verse, "He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence, and precious shall their blood be in his sight;" and he looks beyond the fame which Solomon was to acquire for his wisdom and his power, to the undying, the eternal fame which Messiah was to purchase by the offering of himself, when he says, in the words of the text, "His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun."

It would be out of place at present to enter into any formal proof of the circumstance we have hitherto taken for granted—that although the psalm was composed with immediate reference to Solomon, it was designed by the Spirit of God to foretell the glory of One who was greater than Solomon: for, assuredly, if in any part of the Old

Testament Jesus Christ is spoken of at all, it is here ; and you will search for him in vain among the ceremonies and sacrifices of the law, and in the writings of the prophets, if your faith does not perceive him evidently set before you in the words of the text.

In endeavouring, by the blessing of God, to illustrate these words, there are two points which I would wish to handle :—first, to mention some of the reasons for which the name of Christ ought to be perpetuated ; and, secondly, to state the way in which it is perpetuated.

I. First, we are to state some of the reasons for which the name of Christ ought to be perpetuated.

The circumstances which procure immortality (as it is often misnamed) for men, are generally reducible to two classes ; consisting either of important benefits which they have conferred upon their fellow-creatures by their wisdom and benevolence, or of splendid conquests which they have achieved by their power. When we go to history, however, for our information, it is the latter of these two circumstances which we find has, for the most part, contributed to render men illustrious, and to procure for their names a place in the memory of all succeeding generations. The truly great and useful deeds of the benevolent have been often buried in silence, while victories, and massacres, and cruelty, and every evil passion which disturbs the welfare of society, have been emblazoned by the fancy of the poet, and the pen of the historian, as if men delighted to record and remember those things which demonstrate the corruption of their nature, rather than the gentle qualities which bear testimony to their having been formed at first in the image of God, although the traces of that image are now almost effaced from their souls. We esteem it a happy circumstance, therefore, that in pointing out the reasons for which the name of Christ is entitled to everlasting remembrance, we can not only speak of him as the benefactor of the human race, but as a mighty conqueror, who, travelling in the greatness of his strength, and by his own resistless arm prostrated every foe with whom he had to grapple, and came off more than victorious. We can appeal, not only to every generous feeling of your nature, and demand a place in it for the memory of Jesus of Nazareth ; but we can ask you, by your love of every thing that is called heroic, by your admiration of every thing that

displays courage and prowess, to bestow a share of your applause upon Him who subdued more powerful adversaries than human weapon ever destroyed—who erected a more glorious kingdom than human conqueror ever established—and whose conquests were all undertaken, and all completed for the benefit of his elected people, and not for the furtherance of his personal ambition. Christ, then, I remark, in the first place, is worthy to have his name preserved for ever, because he was the benefactor of the human race.

There is a difficulty, however, my friends, in singling out and arranging the benefits which Christ has conferred upon his people, and which entitle him to have his name continued for ever ; because they are all so great, and so infinitely important to mankind. Remember, that by nature you lie under condemnation ; that when you come into the world you are loaded with the wrath and curse of God ; and that Christ blots out the sentence of condemnation, and reconciles you to the Father by the blood of his cross. Remember that you are naturally in a state of darkness with regard to the requirements of God, and to the way in which you can offer him an acceptable service ; and that Christ sets these requirements before you in his Word, and enlightens you in the way in which God is to be served, by telling you to exercise faith in himself, and love to your heavenly Father, as the two great principles by which his people are infallibly directed. Remember that there is not one hero present who does not feel, or who has not felt in his heart, an opposition to the will of God, and a desire to depart from him ; and that Christ destroys this enmity of the natural man, and, by his Spirit, makes his people “willing in the day of his power,” so that it becomes as their meat and as their drink to do the will of God. Remember that you either are at this moment, or have been held in bondage by Satan, and liable to sink in your struggles with the world, which is Satan’s prime agent ; and that Christ strikes off these iron fetters and makes his grace triumph over the power of the world. Remember that you were banished from paradise, and reserved to the fearful judgment of the great day, and to the tortures which await the wicked for ever ; and that Christ has purchased a world of glory for his people, of which paradise can serve but as a type, and has converted judgment for them

into a scene of triumph. And, when you remember these things, say where we should begin in our enumeration of the benefits which the Redeemer has showered upon our race, and which make him worthy to have his name continued for ever! Shall we begin with the pardon and reconciliation which he purchased by giving himself up to death in the stead of his chosen ones—by submitting to the stroke of the sword of justice which awoke against him, instead of those who were actually guilty? Those among you who are weary and heavy laden by the sense of guilt and unworthiness, are ready to exclaim, that this is indeed the point from which we should set out in describing the blessings conferred by Jesus. You feel yourselves, as it were, pressed down by an overpowering weight whenever you desire, in your present circumstances, to contemplate God, and to think of eternity; you feel that you have not even gained the threshold, in the way of being restored to his favour; your conscience has not yet tasted of the peace which is so plentifully dispensed in the gospel. You are placed precisely in the same situation as an individual, who, when he is informed that some revolution in his worldly affairs, of the utmost importance to him, is to take place, continues to hover between hope and fear, until he receives authentic intelligence of the reality, and seeks from time to time to relieve his anxiety by recalling to his mind the reasonable grounds on which his hope may be built. So it is with you. On being told that there is pardon for the guiltiest, that there is merit enough in the blood of Christ for cleansing even the chief of sinners, you are filled with anxiety as to the possibility of the good news being addressed to you. "Can it be true," you say, "that for us, who have offended so heinously—who have so long abused God's ordinances—who have misinformed our opportunities, there should be full and gratuitous pardon offered? Can it be true, that the burden of our sins is cast upon Christ, and that our justification in the sight of God is made to rest, not upon willing and sincere obedience on our part, but wholly upon the obedience of the Lord our righteousness?" You are perplexed by the very magnitude and liberality of the gospel offer, and you seek to be freed from your perplexity by dwelling, from time to time, upon the finished work of the Saviour. It would be delightful, therefore, to your souls, if we were to speak at length

of Christ as the purchaser of pardon, and to set before you with all possible minuteness, the grounds on which you have to look for the forgiveness and favour of your God. And, my friends, we have all so much need of the refreshment which the plain scriptural account of the work of redemption communicates to the guilty soul, that, often as we have stated it to you, it may be well to turn your thoughts for a moment to the consideration of it. To the fact, then, that Christ bore in his own person the punishment of his people's sins, we have the explicit testimony of the Spirit by Isaiah, "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities"—"the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." To the fact, that the punishment which he suffered is available as an atonement for our iniquities, we have the testimony of the Apostle to the Hebrews, chap. ix. 12: "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal *redemption for us.*" To the fact, that his work is recognised and approved by God, the same Apostle bears testimony in the epistle to the Romans, chap. i. 4: "Jesus was declared the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead." And to the fact, that we are made partakers of pardon by the free grace of God, without money and without price; and that all, even the guiltiest are invited to share in it, these beautiful scriptures bear ample testimony: "therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," and "*whosoever* will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely." Such is the testimony of God's Word to the grand truths which impart joy and peace to the sin-troubled conscience; such is the fountain opened up to the house of David for sin and for uncleanness; and to all who are perplexed about the safety of their state, we would say, step in, and be cleansed. And when you think of your own deservings, and of God's unmerited grace; when you think of what Christ was from eternity, and what he became to make an atonement for you, you will join with the Apostle in giving "*thanks unto God for his unspeakable gift,*" and with the Psalmist in exclaiming, "*the Redeemer's name shall endure for ever!*"

But, we have further to remark, that while the weary and heavy-laden delight to dwell upon the blessing of pardon, and give

it the first place in their thoughts, there are others, who having already closed with the preliminary offer of the Gospel, and, being engaged in fighting their way to the heavenly inheritance, are now thirsting after the *grace* of the Redeemer, and making conformity to the image of God the grand object of their attainment. Now, do we not describe your experience, believers, when we say, that there is a weakness about you, which sometimes betrays itself, when most of all you would wish to be raised above it? There are little irregularities of temper which, you feel, require to be smoothed down; there are tendencies of mind inconsistent with the holiness of your vocation; there is a want of resolution in your endeavours to serve God, and to resist sin, which sometimes makes itself manifest at the very point where you had previously supposed yourselves impregnable. Like the Israelites of old, you have been brought out of Egypt, and saved from the bondage of the great enemy of your souls; but the marks of the fetters are upon you, and it seems as if you were abandoned in the wilderness, to perish for want of sustenance, and as if every step of your progress had to be taken in the face of enemies determined and able to oppose it. "Oh, where are the manifold consolations of Christ?" you are sometimes tempted to ask, "and where is the promised strength of his Spirit; where is the shield of faith, and the breast-plate of righteousness, and the helmet of salvation, in which we were to be equipped, and with which we were to be made more than conquerors? It cannot be that God has forgotten to be gracious, and that his promises are become of none effect: we have surely been the victims of delusion—we have gone into the battle without having proved our weapons!" Such are the feelings you experience, and the cloud which gathers upon your hopes, when you think of your many short-comings; when you measure yourselves by the divine law, or when you feel your good purposes unable to combat the evil with which you are encompassed. How refreshing, then, is it for you to find, that neither those who have gone before you, nor yourselves, have ever been left altogether without remedy in this truly painful state? Not only does Christ procure forgiveness of all the iniquities of his people, and heal all their diseases, and redeem their life from destruction; but he crowns them also with loving-kindness and

tender mercy, and satisfies their mouth with good things! He does not permit them to become the prey of their many adversaries; but "when the enemy comes in like a flood," the Captain of salvation "raises up a standard" for the defence of his people. The principle of spiritual life, which is imparted to them at the moment when they are brought to the faith of the Gospel, is nourished by his ordinances and his word; the very feeling of weakness which is about them is converted into an instrument for increasing their strength, because it teaches them to lean upon the Lord, and to go frequently to his throne for help. And, perhaps, we never see the believer's happiness at its full, except in some of those favoured moments when such a promise as this, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," is vividly realized at the footstool of God, when pardon is felt to be sealed, and grace is richly communicated, and Satan and the world, and the flesh, are defied and overcome in the strength of that grace. Then does the heart break forth in the language of the Psalmist—"What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" Then does the soul feel Christ's title to have his name and his memory perpetuated through all generations.

But, after all, what are the pardon and the grace, of which we have been speaking, but handmaids to glory! And why are they imparted, but to pave the way to glory! It is to this, then, that we must look, if we would really perceive the benefits which Jesus has conferred upon mankind. But there hangs a dimness over that land of glory, which the eye of man cannot penetrate; and the figurative language in which the Scriptures have described it, teaches us that the human conception is not qualified at present to measure it. It is called a *rest*. Bring hither, then, your cares and sorrows, ye friends of Jesus; bring hither your troubles whether earthly or spiritual; bring hither your wrestlings with the adversities of life, and with the powers of darkness; bring them all hither and cast them down, for into that rest they cannot enter. It is called a land of *light*. Bring hither your doubts and anxieties, ye trembling followers of the Lamb; bring hither your fears of sinking into condemnation; bring hither your perplexities about the safety of your state, and about your little progress in the life of faith; bring them all hither and cast them down, for

that light will chase them for ever away. It is called a land in which there shall be *no more curse*. There is no violated law there entailing misery ; there is no offended justice there calling aloud for punishment ; there is no outraged holiness there demanding satisfaction. Oh ! if we were permitted but for a moment to draw aside the curtain which veils that land from your sight, and to show you the multitudes who have gone thither out of tribulation before you, and who are even now in the midst of their pure and hallowed enjoyments ; if we could exhibit to you the patriarchs, and prophets, who were carried thither by the faith of the Saviour yet to come ; or the Apostles and Saints, in after ages, who have been exalted by the faith of the Saviour already crucified ; if you could but behold many of those who have sat with you at these communion tables, and shown forth the death of the Redeemer, whom they now behold face to face, and with whose likeness their souls are now satisfied, what voice would not then catch up the language of the text, and exclaim, that Christ's name is worthy to endure for ever, and to be continued as long as the sun !

Again, I remark, in the second place, under this general head, that Christ is worthy to have his name continued for ever, because he appears in the character of a conqueror.

What a dismal prospect would our world have presented, if, after the apostasy of our first parents, there had been no check whatever imposed upon the supremacy of Satan ! Just contemplate that part of it, where the salt of Christianity has even been scattered. See how much homage is still willingly rendered to the tempter—how many passions of the human heart are readily devoted to his service—how many agents he has in all directions, busied in endeavouring to corrupt the influence of the truth, and to lead astray the unsuspecting ; and then imagine what would have been the state of things, if his kingdom had been set up without a rival in the world ! We might make the picture hideous enough, indeed, by setting before you the condition of the heathen, where his dominion is undisturbed ; but we need not go for a specimen to them, when we are furnished with so many specimens at the door. In all the malignant feelings that brood in the breast of man, and occasionally burst forth in deeds of violence—in all the impure desires that are caged

in the heart, and sometimes break up the harmony of families, and the order of society—in all the vain show for which so many sacrifice the welfare of their souls, we have examples of the working of Satan's power ; and what would not that power have effected, had not Christ set boundaries to it at present, with a view to its final overthrow ! But he has set these boundaries. “ He entered into the strong man's house, and spoiled him of his prey.” He came to open conflict with him, and strip him of his power. The manner, indeed, in which he chose to manage that conflict, and the weapons wherewith he maintained it, were alike extraordinary. He did not stand forth arrayed in his essential glory, and hurl his resistless thunders against the serpent's head ; but as the human race had fallen into Satan's grasp, he came clothed with human nature to free them from it ; and by “ the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God,” he baffled the subtlety of the enemy, and taught his people how they also might resist it. It is not so necessary, however, that we enter into any particular details of our Lord's combat with the prince of the power of the air, which continued from the moment of his birth, until he said upon the cross, “ It is finished ! ” as that we press upon you the fact, that the question is altogether a practical one. It does not concern the respective powers of Christ and of Satan so much as it concerns yourselves. “ Touch not mine anointed, and do my people no harm,” is the language in which Christ now addresses your great enemy ; and the very proof that he has chained the old serpent, and overthrown his dominion, is just to be found in this, that all his fiery darts fall pointless against the faith by which ye are supported. We would call upon believers to compare their present estate with that estate of sin and misery in which they formerly groaned, or rather we should say, in which they had reason to groan. Is not the freedom of the children of God now yours, instead of that willing servitude to which you were once reduced through the depravity of your nature ? Do you not feel that you have been rescued from the dank and loathsome dungeons of Satan, into the light and liberty of God's heritage ? And if the ransomed captive delights to repeat the very name of him who has set him free, will not ye honour the name of Jesus, by whom “ the prey was taken from the mighty, and the lawful captives redeemed ? ”

There was another enemy, however, besides Satan, whom our Lord had to conquer—and that was death. It reigned from Adam to Moses, and from Moses to Christ, subjecting all to its fearful sway, filling men's souls with dread and uncertainty, and poisoning all their happiness. It stood forth as the penalty of the violated law, assuming to itself universal empire. "It passed upon all men, for that all had sinned." It left the marks of its ravages every-where—seizing, without exception, the young and the old; and, what rendered those ravages so terrible, it never disclosed itself as the messenger of an eternal sleep, but it whispered to the awakened conscience, that the grave was only a prison-house in which the body was to be confined until it should be brought forth to the judgment. With death then did Christ enter the lists; and with it his conflict was severe, though glorious. An old divine, in describing the conflict, has compared death to a serpent, plunging its sting so deeply into its victim's side that it had not power to draw it out again. Christ received the sting. The poison rushed into his veins: "he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." But he still retained the sting; and, on the third day, he rose again, bearing it along with him from the sepulchre, and saying—"Oh, death, where is now thy sting! oh, grave, where is now thy victory!" The sovereignty of death is thus destroyed, and the kingdom of life and immortality is erected upon its ruins. Come, and look into the sepulchre of the Son of God, ye who believe upon his name, and who have already experienced the first resurrection from sin to holiness. What mean these linen clothes which ye see lying, and that napkin thrown aside by itself, which had been wrapt around the Saviour's head? These are the only reliques which the grave retains of its power over him, and such reliques only shall it retain of its power over you. Ye shall leave behind you the linen clothes in which was wrapt your mortal body—only that the immortal may be arrayed in the robes that have been washed and purified in the blood of the Lamb; ye shall give the sepulchre the covering that was put upon your head, only that ye may be encircled with that crown, of which the holiness, and innocence, and immortality that were lost by the Fall, shall again form the eternal gems! Is there any heart then so cold, that, on contemplating the pardon, and grace, and glory bestowed

by Christ upon his people, and the victory over Satan and death, which he has won for them, it will not join with the Psalmist in exclaiming—Thy name, O Jesus, shall endure for ever; thy name shall be continu'd as long as the sun?

II. We come now to the second general head, which was to be considered, viz. the way in which the name of Christ is perpetuated.

And here I remark, first, that his name is perpetuated in the hearts of his people.

He himself gives us a statement of the reason, when he says, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men toward me." The atonement of Christ, to which the allusion is here made in the words, "if I be lifted up," is not only the corner-stone on which man must rest in looking for free pardon and renewing grace, but it is also the grand doctrine around which his affections are all clustered. And well may they be excited by this doctrine, when we think of the aspect in which it enables us to view God and futurity. When we say to those who are in an unconverted state, that God is good, they admit the truth, because they cannot but feel his goodness every day extended toward them. But this does not remove the suspicion wherewith they contemplate him, when they remember that he is afterwards to bring them to a reckoning. When we say to them that God is holy, they will not venture to dispute it; because it is visibly demonstrated in every page of his Word, and has often been verified in his dealings with his sinful creatures. But they dare not say that they love that holiness of his, or that they perceive in it any beauty; because it is a death-blow to their expectations of everlasting happiness, and therefore do they attempt to escape from the very contemplation of it. When we tell them that God is just, they acknowledge that the very perfection of his nature requires him to be so; since there is no little feeling of partiality which can move him "to accept of any man's person," or to deal falsely with the children of men; but let their own hearts tell, whether they have always loved that justice! How much love, I would ask, is mingled with the views, which force themselves upon the notice of the wicked, when at any time they think of being summoned to the tribunal of God, to receive according to the deeds done in the body, and when they cannot discern a single ground on which to trust for acceptance with him? Would not these

men gladly wish that the justice of God were annihilated, which thus stands, as they must feel, so directly as an obstacle in the way of their peace? But when we tell them of God's goodness in Christ; when we speak of his holiness and justice as demonstrated upon the Cross; when we hold up to their view the love of their heavenly Father, in not sparing his own Son; and when we describe the all-sufficiency of Christ's atonement—then is there presented to all, however much they may have formerly been opposed to God, an encouragement to stand no longer at a distance, and look at him who holds their destinies in his hand, but to draw nigh, and see the blood which has reconciled them, and to adore the mercy of Him who has established the ministry of reconciliation! Yes, my friends, it is in the doctrine of the atonement, that guilty man beholds his peace sealed, and his fears removed; it is there that he learns to love God, and to exercise a humble trust in him; and these feelings cannot be produced without exciting, at the same time, the most ardent affection, and the warmest gratitude, toward Christ, "who first loved us, and gave himself for us." The more we reflect upon the boundless mercy that has been exercised toward us, and the more fully we appreciate the benefits which we have received, the more vividly will the name of Christ dwell in our hearts, and the more frequently will it be the theme of our conversation. When we look back to the primitive ages of the Church, we find the love of the Redeemer more deeply engraven on the hearts of his followers, than that banishment or death could efface it. That love prompted them and upheld them, in all their travail, to spread the knowledge of the truth among the nations: when they died, the love which the Holy Ghost had kindled, through their labours, in congenial bosoms, brought the truth onward to another generation; and thus can we trace from our own day, back to the days of the Son of man, love to the Saviour for his finished work—sometimes, indeed, more strongly, and sometimes more weakly developed, but always employed by the Spirit as a grand instrument for perpetuating Christ's name in the world. The names of earthly conquerors and benefactors may be lost, because their victories and their benefits have only a temporary existence; but the name of Jesus is associated with blessings, which are fresh and needful to every succeeding race of

mankind; and, therefore, in the hearts of the believers of every race, shall it be embalmed, while the present state of things is upheld: "His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun."

Again, I remark, that the name of Christ is perpetuated in the holiness of his people.

God has established a witness for himself in the intellectual constitution, which he has imparted to his creatures. *He* must necessarily have understanding who has given understanding to man; *He* must be wise and good who has implanted traces of these qualities in the human mind; *He* must be a moral Being, the rewarder of holiness, and the avenger of sin, who has set up the faculty of conscience in the breast. In like manner may we say, that Christ has erected a perpetual and a faithful witness for himself in the holiness with which his people are invested. Whence do they derive all the earnestness which they display in working the work of God? Whence comes the zeal which they manifest for advancing his glory? Whence comes the conformity which they exhibit to his law? Ask them if these qualities spring spontaneously from their own hearts, and they will tell you that in them there dwelleth no good thing, and that they have nothing of their own, but sin and unrighteousness! Ask them if these qualities have been learned from the maxims and example of the world, and they will tell you that the world, both in its opinions and its practice, is the enemy of God, and therefore the enemy of holiness! Whence then is it, I would ask again, that Christ's people are a holy people? It is just, my friends, because they are his. He communicates to them his own Spirit; by that Spirit, he creates them in his own image; he nourishes them by his own grace. There is no such thing as native holiness now to be found among mankind; it is all derived—it all flows to us through the channel of the atonement. That quality which moralists call goodness, and which some of them seem to substitute for the righteousness of Christ, is but filthy rags. Every thing that is worthy of the name of goodness in the sight of God, did man cast away, when he cast away himself; and the holiness without which we cannot see the Lord, comes to us in the way of grace by the Cross of Christ. The same finished work which threw open the flood-gates of mercy, and made it consistent for God to be the justifier of the ungodly, in-

roduced once more knowledge, and righteousness, and holiness, into the world. When the Saviour went away, he sent the comforter to his disciples ; and that blessed Spirit even now abides with us, and sanctifies us. It has been said, and justly said, by a defender of the Truth, that whoever beholds a Jew, beholds an incontrovertible testimony to the truth of Christianity. So we would say, that whenever you see a *holy* man—a man superior to the pleasures, and sins, and perishing enjoyments of the world—a man putting away from him every thing that would come into competition with the service of God, mortifying the deeds of the body, and keeping himself free from the pollution of every thing that is forbidden—you see a living memorial of Christ. For if Christ had not died and risen again, that man could not have been sanctified. And is it not delightful to think, that these testimonies to the Saviour's name have never been altogether wanting ; that as God has never left himself without witness in the wonderful economy of his providence, so Christ has never left himself without witness in the dispensation of grace. Sometimes, indeed, as was the case with Noah and Abraham, the witnesses for Christ have almost stood alone in the midst of their generation, and have proclaimed his name, by their holy lives, to those who honoured it with no regard ; but, at other times, there have been thousands who did not bow the knee to Baal, but maintained, in the face of every opposition, their devotion to the Saviour's cause, and showed that they were quickened by his Spirit. How many such are there here ? How many witnesses has the Redeemer among you ? This is, after all, the real practical question ; this is the point that must be urged upon your consciences. Whoever is among you unbelieving and unsanctified, does not confess Christ before men, and will not be confessed by him before his Father who is in heaven. Have you reflected upon the awful alternative ? Whatever may be your pretensions to the name of a disciple, and whatever your hopes of a disciple's reward—if you are not holy, you gainsay, so far as in you lies, the truth of Christianity—you call God a liar, and you will have your everlasting portion with his enemies. Let me entreat you, then, to seek for gospel holiness, through the medium of the gospel sacrifice, that you may not only escape the doom of the impenitent and unbelieving, but that you may be ex-

alted to the dignity of witnesses for Christ. Those who treat of the evidences of our faith, speak of what they call the *cumulative* evidence. They mean the evidence which the accumulation of scientific and other facts, and the fulfilment of prophecy, bear to the truth of the Christian system. But, my friends, there is a higher species of cumulative evidence still, which can be appreciated by every capacity ; a living, a moving mass of evidence, which is to be seen and to be read in the midst of the business and the intercourse of the world ; and that is, the evidence furnished by the holiness of the Redeemer's people. This evidence sheds its light where books cannot penetrate ; it reaches the heart which demonstration cannot convince ; it overpowers the conscience which the threatenings of hell itself cannot shake. Whenever one man passes from darkness to light, he adds to the force of this evidence ; he makes Christianity patent to a family, or a neighbourhood, from which, perhaps, it was before excluded ; and he prepares a place for Christ's name to be honoured, where, perhaps, it was formerly blasphemed. Come, then, and let us, with one heart, implore the grace of our God, that we may be enabled to add each his share to the strength of the argument for Christianity, and that we may assist each in handing down to the generations yet to come, the name of Him who washed us from our sin in his own blood.

Lastly. I remark, that the name of Christ is perpetuated in the ordinances of his Church.

Every thing connected with the worship of a christian assembly, and more especially the two standing ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, form a direct means of preserving the remembrance of Christ's name. These ceremonies serve exactly the same purpose as the triumphal pillars of ancient times ; each sacrament speaks of the achievements of the Captain of the Lord's host, as clearly as the pillar, with its inscription, tells us of the victories of him who erected it. No sophistry can set aside the force of this argument ; for, whenever we attempt to go back to the origin of that solemn service, which we are this day to commemorate, we find it existing in every age, in one form or other, until we arrive at the age of Christ and his Apostles. There the inquiry terminates ; and we feel ourselves obliged to conclude, either that all history is false, or that the leading facts of the

christian history are true. In this respect, then, as well as in the former, has Christ committed his name, if we may so speak, to the keeping of his people; and every individual who places himself at the Lord's table, contributes in so far to the endurance of that name. But it must be remembered, that a name may be perpetuated without being honoured; and those who partake of the ordinance of the Supper, have need to examine themselves, whether or not by divine grace they have been invested with the qualities of *worthy* partakers; because, unless they have, their worship is but a bodily service, and the holy name by which they are called, will not be glorified, but blasphemed through their instrumentality. Those who come hither this day, to assist in erecting the triumphal pillar to the Saviour, in commemoration of his victories over Satan and death, and who themselves are still led captive by Satan, and still dead in trespasses and sins, seem, as it were, to build up Christ's memorial with the one hand, while, with the other, they are busied in defacing its inscription—which is, “Holiness to the Lord.” My friends, let me admonish you to beware of this inconsistency. The words, “Lord, Lord,” will not save us; the performance of outward solemnities will not save us; it is the homage of the heart | Amen and amen.”

and the life that Christ requires; and he that comes to his table to show forth his death, and to perpetuate his name, must have “clean hands and a pure heart;” he must not have “lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully with his lips.” “This is the generation of such as seek him” truly; these are the people whom he will at last recognise and acknowledge as his own. If ye have tasted, then, that the Lord is gracious, and are prepared to assemble round the standard of the Cross, with hearts full of love to Him that suffered for your sins, and hungering and thirsting after the holiness which He bestows, ye do indeed shed a lustre on his cause, and contribute to the perpetuation of his glorious name; “men will take knowledge of you, that you have been with Jesus;” the infidel will cease to scoff at the ordinance, the power of which he seeks not to understand; and when ordinances shall have vanished away—when the sun, and the moon, and the stars, shall have been darkened, and when *He* shall have come in his glory whom now ye assist to honour, ye shall be exalted to celebrate the triumphs of his name and of his power through eternal ages. “Blessed, then, be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory

GOD IS LOVE;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL, GLASGOW, ON THE AFTERNOON OF
SABBATH, 29th DECEMBER, 1833,

By the Rev. THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.,*
Professor of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh.

“*God is love.*”—1 JOHN iv. 16.

You will recollect, that in the earlier part of the day I endeavoured to bring forward to your consideration, the natural tendency or bias of the human heart to conceive of God in such a way as necessarily to inspire us with dread and distrust of him. Were one to go learnedly to work on this subject, I believe, he would find ample confirmation of this; he would find that the natural judgment of all nations—of all pagan and idolatrous nations, for example—is of God, rather as a God of vengeance who regards us with displeasure, than of God as a God of love. But without going learnedly to prove this, we may make a direct address to the consciences of those before us; and I

refer to you, whether your first and natural notions of God are not such as to inspire you with a certain distrust of him. I do not say these were the original notions of humanity as constituted at first, but they are the notions which one and all of *us* when we come into the world have of God, as an awful, severe, and repulsive Being, and arising very much from two causes which I endeavoured to lay before you. Before man fell, God walked with man in the peacefulness and security of the garden of Eden, and man had a direct and, as it were, personal manifestation of Deity. Since that time man has lived at an inaccessible distance from God; and the first reason of

* For the Forenoon's Discourse on this subject, see No. 96, page 185.

that natural bias we have of Deity was, we stated, that recoiling fear which we have of any being of known power but of unknown purpose. This is a general and natural cause of distrust.

In the second place, we attempted to bring forward a sort of counter-argument to overcome this bias or apprehension of nature. The counter-argument is the incarnation of Christ, in whom we saw the divinity embodied, and could join with our study of his character our study of the character of the Godhead; for he that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father also. We arrive in this way at a very deep apprehension of God as a God of love.

We stated, that there is another reason for this selfish distrust—a reason which is not mere imagination, but resting on a far more solid basis, the consciousness which one and all of us have of being defaulters of that law of right and wrong which God has put into our hearts, and, therefore, of being rebels against that Lawgiver who inserted the law in our hearts; and I endeavoured to bring forward the counterpart-argument here also, an argument which could only be derived from the gospel of Jesus Christ, as was the incarnation. The former was brought to bear on the uniform apprehension we have of a Being who is armed with great power, and of whom we are at the same time ignorant, because invisible. The counteracting argument to the second reason is, the doctrine of the atonement, which we endeavoured to bring to bear on that second reason so as to expel from the understanding the tendency of the heart to conceive of God as a God of terror, that you might be conducted to the conclusion, that God is indeed a God of love.

I will say no more on that second argument. I wish you to advert to that noble peculiarity in the representation which Christ gave us of the Godhead, in that, while it sets him forth as a God of love, it does so without injuring, but rather with the highest possible enhancement of all the other attributes of the divine nature. When God is seen by us in the face of Jesus Christ, he is seen in the brightness of his mercy to sinners; but it is mercy so accompanied with holiness and truth—so enshrined, as it were, in the high honours of a vindicative law, as to throw over the character of the Godhead a deeper sacredness than before. In that halo which is over the mercy-seat

of Christianity there is a radiance of all the attributes of the Almighty. Along with the love that gladdens the believer's heart there is an august and awful majesty that solemnizes it; and while in this wondrous spectacle we behold peace to the sinner, yet seen it is through the mystery of a world's atonement. We there behold the evil of sin in most awful and appalling manifestation. When the sinner looks on all this as the fire of heaven's jealousy directed against himself to burn up and fiercely to destroy, there is but room in his heart for the one feeling of overwhelming terror; but when he sees this as it is averted from him, because of Him who, for his sake, sustained the agonies of the cross, he can look on without fear or terror; but at the same time, it is impossible to look intelligently without feelings of deepest reverence. It is like the different sensations we experience from viewing a burning volcano from a place of exposure and a place of safety. In the one case, there are emotions in the mind of terror; in the other, here are emotions of admiring taste. For the full enjoyment of this scene a degree of conscious security is indispensable. A sensation of danger would disturb, and despair would utterly destroy it; and not without the certain belief of personal safety, would the fine sensibilities of taste have their place in the bosom. The soul must be in a state of repose ere it can view those characters of grandeur or of gracefulness, which lie in the panorama before it. Till the fear of danger was removed there would be a tormenting sensibility that would hush all other feelings; and neither the graces nor the sublimities of a prospect so marvellous would have any charms for the imagination.

I observed that the doctrine of the text ought to tell on you individually. I conceive it of the greatest importance, that you should think the Gospel as much intended for you individually, as if you were the only sinner in the world—as if you individually had been the only sinner that needed to be reclaimed. You should read the Bible every one of you, as if it were directed to you alone; and I do think this the only profitable way of reading it. For example, when you read, "Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out, just read it as if you were the only sinner in the world. In like manner, when it is said, "Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the

earth," read it as if it were said, *Look you you unto Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.* It will not land you into Antinomianism: go over the whole length and breadth of the Bible in that way, and you will come unto passages that will effectually guard you against Antinomianism. I wish the Gospel to tell on each of you, as if you were the only object of the Gospel message; and I am perfectly assured that, while it is the most effectual method of bringing home to your hearts all the comforts of the Gospel it is, at the same time, the most effectual mode of bringing home to your hearts all the warnings and threatenings of the Gospel.

To apply this to the love of God, for the purpose of making the doctrine I insisted on in the earlier part of the day available to ourselves personally, we must view the love of God not as a vague and inexplicable generality, but as specially directed, nay, actually proffered, and that pointedly and individually to each of us. It is not sufficiently adverted to by hearers, nor sufficiently urged by ministers, that the constitution of the Gospel warrants this appropriation of its blessings by each man to himself. This all-important truth, so apt to be lost sight of in lax and lazy speculation, may be elicited from the very terms in which the Gospel is proposed to us—in the very phraseology in which its overtures are couched. It is a message of good news unto all people: to me, therefore, as one of the people; for where is the Scripture that tells me that I am an outcast? Christ is set forth as a propitiation for the sins of the *world*; and God so loved the *world*, as to send his Son into it. Let me, therefore, who, beyond all doubt, am in the *world*, take the comfort of these gracious promulgations; for it is only to those who are out of the *world*, or away from it, as the devils who believe and tremble are away from the *world*, that they do not belong.

The delusive imagination in the hearts of many, and by which the Gospel is with them bereft of all significance and effect, is, that they cannot take any general announcement or general invitation that is made or given to them, unless in virtue of some certain mark or certain designation by which they are specially included in it. Now, in real truth, it is all the other way. It would require a certain mark, a certain designation, to exclude them; and without some such mark, which should expressly

signalize them, they should not refuse a part in the announcements or invitations of the Gospel. If the Gospel has made no exception of them, they either misunderstand the Gospel, or, by their unbelief, make the author of it a liar, if they except themselves. They demand the particular warrant for believing that they are comprehended within the limits of a gospel-call to reconciliation with God. Now, the call is universal, and it would rather need a particular warrant to justify their own dark and distrustful imagination of being without its limits. When in the spirit of a perverse or obstinate melancholy—and this is what we have sometimes to contend with in the case of Christians who shut themselves out from the whole comfort of the New Testament—they ask their Christian minister, what is the ground on which he would take them into the household of God's reconciled family? Well may he ask, what is the ground on which they keep themselves out? He stands on triumphant vantage-ground for his own vindication. His commission is to preach the Gospel to every creature under heaven, and that takes them in; or to say, that "Whosoever cometh unto Christ, shall not be cast out," and that takes them in; or, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open, I will enter into friendship and peace with him," that also takes them in; or, "Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth"—there is no outcast spoken of here—and that too takes them in; or, "Every man who asketh, receiveth;" and surely if language has a meaning, that takes them in; or, "Christ came into the world to save sinners," and unless they deny themselves to be sinners, that takes them in; in a word, although they may cast themselves out, the primary overtures of the Gospel do not cast them out. They are not forbidden by God; they are only forbidden by themselves. There is no straitening with him; the straitening is only in their own narrow, and dark, and suspicious bosoms. It is true they may abide in spiritual darkness if they will, even as a man may, of his own pleasure, immure himself in a dungeon, or obstinately shut his eyes; still it holds true, notwithstanding, that the light of the sun in the firmament is not more open to all eyes, than the light of the Sun of righteousness is for the rejoicing of the spirits of all flesh. The blessings of the Gospel are as accessible to all who will as the water, or the air, or any of the common

benefits of nature. The element of heavenly love is in as universal diffusion among the dwellings of men, as is the atmosphere which they breathe, and which solicits admittance at every door; and the ignorance and unbelief of men are the only obstacles it has to struggle with. It is commensurate with the species, and may be tendered, and honestly tendered, to each individual of the human family.

This brings us to the third head of discourse, proposed by us in the earlier part of the day. The object of the first head was to consider the kind of feeling man has naturally and originally towards God; the object of the second was to exhibit those gospel arguments by which this feeling should be overcome, and by which we come to view God as a God of love, instead of viewing him as a God that has displeasure towards us; the object of the third was to consider what effect is produced on the feelings and conduct of him who had undergone that change. I consider it as one of the most important transitions in the human soul, when it comes to view God as a God of love. Give me that change, and I am not afraid of all the rest following. I am not afraid of such a change taking place in the whole conduct and feelings of such a one, as to entitle any man, who saw him in comparison with his former state, to pronounce that he had become a new creature. Well, then, let us now suppose that, in any individual instance, (God grant that many such may occur under the ministration of the Gospel!) to the tender of forgiveness—of God's love to man on the one side, there is an acceptance on the other—God is taken at his word, (for that is all that you have to do in the first instance,) and, instead of being regarded with jealousy or terror, or as a distant and inaccessible lawgiver, he is beheld as a reconciled Father in Jesus Christ; or, that all that dark and impenetrable veil which hitherto had mantled the benign

aspect of the Divinity is withdrawn—that the mercy-seat is seen in heaven, not the less to be relied on in its being mercy met with truth—the disclosure made of the love with its smiles of welcome, which beams and beckons there, not the less, but the more to be rejoiced in, in that it is a love in full conjunction with righteousness and love, consecrated by the blood of an everlasting covenant, and shining conspicuous and triumphant amid the honours of a vindicated law:—only imagine a translation of this sort—a translation truly out of darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel, and will you not perceive that, when the light of the Gospel is thus manifest, the love of the Gospel in the heart will follow in its train; and that the love and good-will of God, when once seen and recognised by us, will surely draw *our* love and gratitude back again? If we had but the perception, the emotion would come unbidden; or, in the words of the apostle John, If we knew and believed the love which God hath to us, we should love God, because he first loved us.

This is a most important translation then; and I would make no attempt to stir up the love of God in you, so long as you regarded God armed with displeasure—armed like a strong man to destroy. I cannot see how I could get the love of God established in your hearts, unless I first get your belief of God's love to you. If I could only succeed, in place of that cold representation of the Godhead, which stands before the eye of man as a God armed with displeasure, in finding a place for the Gospel, as God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and not imputing unto men their trespasses; then, to this change in you which the mind takes of God, there would be a corresponding change in the heart from the terror before; for the love would come unbidden, if we could only get the faith established within you.

(To be concluded in our next.)

* * * The conclusion of the Sermon by the Rev. John Somerville of Currie is postponed till a future Number.

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No. 101. SERMON by the Rev. THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D., Edinburgh
SERMON by the Rev. JOHN ANDERSON, Helensburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. JOHN SOMERVILLE, D.D., Currie.

Price :

GOD IS LOVE ;

A Sermon preached by the Rev. THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.—Concluded.

HAVING gone thus far, we are within the operation of a certain law, which acts spontaneously. God is seen to be a God of love, and this calls back love and gratitude to him. "We love him, because he first loved us."

We may here see what evangelical ministers mean, when they tell us of the regenerating power of faith. One of its functions is to justify, but its higher and greater function is to sanctify man. Let but the cold abstractions of unbelief be removed ; and, from that moment the emancipated heart, as if by the operation of a charm, will beat freely and willingly in love to God and love to all his servants. This new faith was the turning point of a new character, and on this single difference between God, viewed as an object of terror, and God viewed as an object of confidence, a complete moral revolution is suspended. Let me be made to know and to believe that God loves me, and, by a law of my mental constitution, I shall be made to love him back again. The intellectual precedes the moral change. It is an article of doctrine, not in the place which it occupies as the dogmas of a theological system, but which is actually seated in the heart, and the article thereof a substantial and living creed. It is this which subdues the whole man into a new creature. The executive power of working this great transformation lies in the truth. In other words, let the faith of the Gospel enter into

the heart of any individual, and it will renovate the man. Let this faith be universal, and we shall behold a renovated world.

I might here indulge in the prolonged perspective of a regenerated species, and that through the practical stepping-stone of a declared Gospel, so that, if the first doctrine of God's loving the world were as generally accepted as it might be heralded, a nation would be born in a day ; but let me urge a lesson, which each of you should carry personally and practically home, and feel how it is, that one might animate his own heart with the love of God and keep this sacred affection glowing there. This is a frequent complaint among Christians, that their hearts are so cold and insensible, and destitute of love to God. How shall we go about it, to put the love where it is not, or to keep the love alive, which is in danger of going into extinction ? It is not to be summoned into being and activity at a call. It is not by any simple or direct effort that you put it into operation within you. You can say to the hand, Do this, and it doeth it ; but we have no mastery over the heart, nor can any of its movements be subjected to a volition or a pause. We cannot, by an immediate plunge among the recesses of our constitution, conjure up any emotion in it. The true way of putting an emotion into the heart, is to put into the mind its appropriate and counterpart object. If I want to light up re-

sentment in the heart, let me think of the injury which provokes it; or, if I want to be moved with compassion, let me dwell on some picture of wretchedness; or, to be regaled with a scene of beauty, let me look on the glories of a summer landscape; or, to stir up love, let me call up some kind and friendly benefactor; or, finally, to kindle in my cold and deserted bosom the love of God, let God's love to me be the theme of my believing contemplation. I shall never light up the affection, by looking inwardly upon myself, but upwardly to the Gospel manifestation of the Divine character, and in bringing it down from the sanctuary that is above me. It is faith which elicits and calls out the feeling, and thus both the lessons of the Bible and the experience of the Christian are at one with the strict philosophy of the closet, when they attest, that the way to build up our hearts in the love of God is to build ourselves up in our most holy faith. Hence that scriptural expression, "faith worketh by love;" so that if you want the love of God in your hearts, there is no other way of getting at it than by thinking of God's love to you. Then the divine love comes unbidden and spontaneous by a law in the constitution of the human heart. When you think of God's love to you, your love comes back to him in virtue of the faith working by love, which is not only announced in the Bible, but is also in strict accordance with all such processes of human affections. If you find your love waxing cool, you can light it up again by some of the affecting truths of Christianity, and, more especially, the truth that God so loved you as to send his Son into the world.

Before I conclude, let me ground on this explanation two practical inferences with which, for the present, I shall conclude the whole of our argument on our text. In the first place, the way to call into your heart the love of God, and to keep it there, is to think on the love of God as manifested in the Gospel, and to dwell upon the thought. It were well if you knew precisely how to go about it, when you want to revive the extinct or languid affection in your bosom. I know of no other way by which you can kindle the love of God within you, than that you summon to the presence of your mind that object which, if only realized or believed in, will, of itself, and spontaneously, or without any farther bidding of the will,

inspire the sensibility you are in quest of. You cannot will the affection into your heart, but by willing into your mind its counterpart object. This reveals to us, and in an aspect in which you may not have been accustomed to behold it, the mighty importance of faith. It is only by thinking rightly or believing rightly, that you can be made to *feel* rightly; and could we only prevail on you to dwell habitually on God's love to you, then should we find a sure high-way to the result of your habitually loving him back again.

But, secondly and lastly, you will perceive from this the mighty importance of a free Gospel, and of your so understanding it, that you may embark upon it, each individual for himself, all your hopes and all your dependence. I trust I have said enough to convince you that none are forbidden, but that the overtures of reconciliation are so framed as abundantly to warn each man to entertain them for himself, as much in fact, as if he were the only sinner in the universe, and as if the whole apparatus of redemption had been set up for his special and solitary behoof.

I may have an opportunity, sooner or later, of unfolding at greater length the scriptural evidence for this right of appropriation, if we may so term it, when I shall take occasion more particularly to show that, while it gives all encouragement to the faith, it does so without prejudice, but rather with a more pointed and powerful call than before, to the repentance and new obedience of the Gospel. The only additional testimony which I shall bring forward at present in favour of this distinct and individual application, by each man to himself, of the overtures of the New Testament, is that remarkable annunciation which was heard from the canopy of heaven, at the birth of our Saviour, not of *good-will* to certain men to the exclusion of others—not an offer made only to some and kept back from the rest of the species, but generally to all men; "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, and *good-will to men*." The generality of the terms is enough for me to speak of; the generality of the terms is enough for me to impress upon each to proceed, as if he had heard, with an audible voice from the canopy of heaven, God's good-will to him, and all of you individually; the generality of the terms tells me that no individual needs to shut himself out from the good-will of his Father in heaven. Let

him be who he may, we would cheer him on to the confidence of God's good-will to *him*, and purely and simply in virtue of his being a man. We see no exception in the text, and, therefore, we make no exception from the pulpit. We find a general assurance in the Word of God, and we cast it abroad among you without reserve and without limitation. Where it is to alight, and whose bosom it is to enter as the harbinger of peace, we know not; but sure we are it can never alight wrong, and that, wherever faith in God is formed, it is followed with the fulfilment of all his purposes. We know well the scruples of the disconsolate, and with what success a perverse and melancholy mind can multiply its arguments for exclusion; but we look to the text, and by one comprehensive sweep it takes in the whole race of men, and empowers the ministers of God to ply with assurances of his good-will all the individuals of all his families. We see there is no straitening with God—favour and forgiveness are ready to come down abundantly from him on every son and daughter of Adam. His mercy rejoices over all, and may be poured out over the wide extent of a sinful creation. The unbelief of man is the only obstacle it has to struggle with. Tell us not in the obstinacy of your distrust, that you are such a sinner. All your sins, many and aggravated as they are, are the sins of a man. Tell us not of the malignity of your disease—it is the disease of a man. Tell us not that you are so grievous an offender, that you are the very chief of sinners—still you are a man. Jesus knew what was in man, and all the varieties of character that belong to him; and still there is something in the Gospel to meet all, and make up for all, for he impairs not by one single exception the universality of the Gospel message, which is “good-will to men.” We again proclaim in your hearing, that the word may sink into all: “Look unto me all the ends of the earth and be saved.” If the call be not listened to, it is not for want of freeness, and kindness, and honesty in the call itself, but for want of confidence and belief in those called. There is no straitening with God—it is all with yourselves; it is all in the cold, and dark, and narrow suspicions which fill up and stifle your own bosoms. The offer of God's good-will through Jesus Christ, is unto all and upon all. The messenger of Christ wants to lodge that offer in your hearts, but

you will not let him; he wants to woo you into confidence, but you remain sullen and inflexible; he wants to pass into your souls, but you refuse the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely; he stands before you the ambassador of a beseeching God, and is charged with the kindest and freest communication to one and all of you; and he does not exceed his commission, when he tells of good-will to *you*, and that nothing is wanting but *your* good-will towards God that you may obtain peace, and consolation, and joy. All of you may come and drink of the waters of life freely. God fastens a mark of exclusion on none of you. He bids us preach the Gospel unto every creature, and every creature who believes will be saved. He has no pleasure in any of your deaths. “Believe, and ye shall be saved”—“Draw near unto God, and he will draw near unto you”—“Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?” We speak to you in the very language of God, though we fall infinitely short of such a tone or such a tenderness as that with which he speaks to you. If you think otherwise, you do him injustice; you look on him with the jaundiced eye of unbelief; you are arraying him in a darker shroud than belongs to him: you mantle one of the attributes of divinity in the gloom of your own minds; you withdraw your faith from his own declaration, as the Lord God merciful and gracious. Instead of yielding him the homage of the true God, you superstitiously tremble before a god of your own forming; you put all the earnest, repeated assurances of God's actual revelation away from you, when he swore by himself that he has no pleasure in your death, when he tries every expedient to quicken your trust in him, and does all that tenderness can devise to remove your every suspicion, and cheer you on to confidence in his good-will. He beseeches you to accept of consolation at his hand. He proffers to you a gift, and condescends so far as to knock at the door of your hearts and crave your acceptance. To do away with such obstruction as lay in the way of the access of the sinner to God, he set up the costly apparatus of redemption. A remission of sins without the shedding of blood is impossible; and he cleared the way of this mighty barrier. He sent his Son to pour out his soul unto death for you: and now that iniquity is put an end to, now that everlasting righteousness is brought in, now that every attribute of his

nature has been magnified by the great sacrifice ; now that the weight of that heavy burden which restrained the expression of his good-will to the children of men is done away by the chastisement of Him who bore

our peace ; now that there is nothing to intercept the glow of friendship from God, does it come down free as the light of day, and rich as the exuberance of heaven upon a despairing world. Amen.

THE WITHERED LEAF ;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE SECESSION CHURCH, RENFIELD STREET, GLASGOW, ON THE LAST SABBATH OF DECEMBER, 1833,

By the Rev. JOHN ANDERSON,

Helensburgh.

“ We all do fade as a leaf ; and our iniquities like the wind, have taken us away.”—ISAIAH lxiv. 6.

SPIRITUAL instructions are frequently conveyed to us in the Scriptures by images drawn from natural objects. In no book are the objects of nature more frequently introduced, for the explanation, the enforcement, and the illustration of truth, than in the Book of God. To the eye of the inspired writers nature seems to have unfolded itself as one vast book of symbols, from which they read lessons to man adapted to the various junctures of life. This book of symbols may be said to have four chapters or leaves—the spring and the summer, autumn and winter. So far as the present year is concerned, the lessons of the spring, and the summer, and the autumn, are ended ; its solemn lesson the winter is now reading. The fields that a short while ago were waving with their golden produce, are now barren and bare ; the skies that were sunny and warm, are now cloudy and cold ; the flowers that, wet with dew, opened their leaves to the sun, or shed their spicy fragrance on the winds, broken in their stem, and bruised in their leaves, are now fast turning into dust and dishonourable ashes ; the trees of the wood and the field are now stripped of their foliage—their leaves that were lately fresh and green, now withered and brown, are falling to the ground, while the few that remain upon the branches seem but to wait for a ruder blast when they also shall be carried away. Such is the condition of the natural world : between this condition and our own is there any analogy ? Is the condition of nature in any respect symbolic of our own ? It is. The prophet in our text takes up a withered leaf, and, entering with it as it were into an

audience of his countrymen, addresses them in these words—“ We all do fade as a leaf.” A withered leaf, then, is this day to be our preacher. What are some of the truths it proclaims, and in which it is wisely adapted and mercifully intended to instruct us ? It instructs us in the following :—

1st. The frailty and shortness of life.

What object in nature is frailer than a withered leaf adhering to the bough by a single thread, and ready to be carried away by the first and feeblest breath of wind. Not more frail, however, is the withered leaf even, than is man that is born of a woman. Consider him in infancy : what object more frail than a human weakling—the infant in the cradle—the babe at the breast ! Is it not the very type of all weakness and all frailty—full of wants, yet without the smallest power to supply them or to make them known ; exposed to dangers which he does not foresee, and which, if he did, he could not control ? If others do not feed him, he must perish of hunger ; if others do not give him drink, he must perish of thirst ; if others do not clothe him, he must perish of cold. Surely on the whole earth there is not a creature more frail and more helpless ! Consider him in the pride and vigour of manhood : even in this period of life, how like a leaf wasted and driven by the wind ! When he imagines his mountain stands strong, and that nothing can move him—when he exalts himself as a god, how weak, indigent, and insufficient—subject to every breath and to every blast ! Is he on the sea?—see how its waves whirl him where they will ! Is he on the land?—see how the winds scorn his bidding, the storm

how it mocks his prospects, the hurricane how it lays his dwelling in ruins! thus, even when standing, is he not liable to fall—when rich to become poor—when strong to become weak? In life is he not every moment liable and ready to die? Thus poor is man in his best estate; thus sure is it that “each man is vanity.” Consider him in old age: is the withered and wasted leaf of winter more withered or more wasted? His eyes how dim, his ear how dull, his limbs how shrunken, his breathing how short and how difficult; how like a walking shadow, a living death; the evil days have come upon him, he is fallen into the “sere and yellow leaf!” Such is man, in infancy, manhood, and old age; nor is he thus frail, but how short-lived as well as frail! To denote the shortness of man’s existence, it is Jeremy Taylor, we think, who remarks that the wise men of the world have contended, as it were, who should denote its shortness by the fittest figures. By one it is likened to a shadow; by another to the shadow of a shade; by another to a vapour; by another to the swift ships; by another to the eagle that hasteth to its prey; by another to the weaver’s shuttle: the day casts it to the night, and the night to the day, till the web of life is spun, and cut from the beam of time. By the prophet it is compared to a leaf. Short is the duration of a leaf: such, however, is the life of man—as short in its duration as it is frail in its texture and fading in its kind. In the withered leaves, then, that at this season of the year are strewwing your path, see, my brethren, the emblem of your condition. Think not more highly of yourselves than you ought to do: look to that withered leaf; like it you are frail, and like it you are fading, and like it you will soon be carried away for ever. If you shall be more deeply impressed with these truths this day than you have hitherto been; if you shall form a truer estimate of your condition than you may have hitherto done; if you shall be instructed more fully in, or be impressed more deeply with, the frailty and shortness of life, this leaf will not have faded and fallen, nor shall we have disengaged from it to you this day, in vain. But not only does the withered leaf instruct us in the conditions of life, it instructs us also in the conditions of death; and this it does,

First, in the nature of death.

A leaf that, having withered on the tree, has fallen to the ground, is a separated, a

disunited thing. It is disunited from its parent tree, it is separated from its sister leaves. Such is death. It is a separation, a disuniting; it is the separation, first of all, of the soul and body. As the union of soul and body constitutes natural life, the separation of soul and body constitutes natural death. This separation every man living must undergo: fatal to man is the neglect of this great truth. Neglect it not, my brethren: when you see a leaf separated from its parent tree, let it remind you of the separation that must one day take place between the body and the soul; let it remind you that you shall not always, as you now do, see through the medium of the eye, and hear through the medium of the ear, and think through the medium of the brain. There is a spiritual world: to that world you belong; in that world as pure spirits you shall exist; on the verge of that spiritual world you are at this moment standing; upon it you are soon to enter; in that world you shall continue to see, but not through the medium of the eye; you shall continue to hear, but not through the medium of the ear; you shall continue to think, but not through the medium of the brain; then all that is in this world as to you—the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, shall come to an end. Now, if it should be the case that your happiness is now consisting in the seeing of the eye, or the hearing of the ear, or the gratification of the senses—in the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and in the pride of life; if your happiness consists in, and is dependent on what is material, what is to become of you in that world that is spiritual? If your supreme happiness consist in aught that is earthly, in what shall it consist, when the world in which you are to dwell, and you yourselves shall no longer be of the “earth earthly,” and when, from all that is earthly, its possessions and its enjoyments, you shall be torn away for ever? If your happiness is connected with time, and the things of time, in what will you find happiness when time and the things of time shall be no more? Think of this, ye who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; think of this, ye who are seeking and finding your chief enjoyment in the pursuits and the pleasures of this passing and this perishing world. Hear it, men and brethren! take it from my lips as the word of God, that a happiness springing from, and ending with time, is no

happiness—it has the show, but not the substance ; it is a happiness that might content us if we were mortal only, but is no portion for an immortal soul. True happiness is an abiding happiness ; the true happiness of an everlasting being is a happiness that, like himself, is everlasting. But what is this true and everlasting happiness? in what does it consist? In “doing the will of God.” A life spent in doing the will of God, is a life of happiness ; a life spent in contravening the will of God, is and must be a life of essential misery. Into such a life, a life of simply doing the will of God, now, my brethren, now that you are, and while you are in the body, enter ; for into this life there is no entrance in the world to come. Of good or evil in the world to come there is no first choice : such a choice must be made here ; and the choice that is made here, is the choice that is ratified hereafter. You are now either doing the will of God, or you are doing your own ; if you are doing your own, you are sowing to the flesh, and shall of the flesh reap a harvest of corruption ; if you are doing the will of God, you are sowing to the Spirit, and of the Spirit and in the Spirit you shall reap a harvest of life eternal. But not only does death separate the soul and the body, it separates and disunites us from our relations and our friends. Very mysterious and deep, as you know well, is the affection we cherish for our relations and kinsmen according to the flesh. Do we hear, for example, of the sickness of a parent or a child, of a sister or a brother—with what eagerness and trepidation do we hasten to their bedside ; with what interest do we gaze on their wan and wasted countenances ; how anxiously do we watch the progress of the disease ; with what pure delight do we witness the first dawning of recovery! On the other hand, when we often look but look in vain, when it is but too plain that they are dying, how does our heart sicken and die! And when at length death has completed his prey ; when the eye is broken from whose look of love our heart drew its sweetest solace ; when the spirit of the beloved object has fled, and all that remains to us is the cold, silent, and inanimate clay, how dreadful is the blow! We are overwhelmed with a sorrow we can scarcely bear, and the bitterness of which words are wanting to express. In our journey through life, many are the clouds which darken our path, and many are the events, the tendency of which is to bruise

our spirit and to break our heart ; but there is no event so solemn and so sad as that which converts our homes into a house of mourning, and stretches one of our nearest and dearest relations on the bed of death. Yet, all painful as this event is, it is one which we may expect to meet, and to meet which we should at all times be prepared. Among the mourners, of whom the earth is full, how many are at this moment uttering the language of the orphan children of Jerusalem—language “every letter of which seems written with a tear, and every word of which seems the sound of a broken heart :” “We are orphans and fatherless, and our mothers are as widows.” How many fond parents, during the past year, have seen their bright and beautiful laid in the dust, and are now left to weep over not only the flower of their flock, but the last of their race! How many husbands have stood by the bed on which the mother of their children lay dying! How many wives lately blessed with the husbands of their hearts, are now lonely and sorrowful widows! See that band of mourners ; how powerful is the claim they have on your sympathy and your tears! yet, while you “weep with them that weep,” weep not for them only, but weep for yourselves. Sad, it is true, is their condition ; but in that condition see, my brethren, the emblems of your own. What they are now, that all of you will be at some time, and may be soon. Children, you may soon lose your parents ; fond parents, you may soon lose your children : your hearths now bright with the sunshine of their happy faces may soon be darkened ; your halls now vocal with their joyous voices may soon be silent. Husbands, you may soon lose “the delight of your eyes ;” and you, happy wives, ye may be soon lonely widows. Such being the case, what influence ought the knowledge of this to have upon your conscience and your conduct? surely, if permitted to exercise its legitimate influence, it will excite us to an immediate and faithful discharge of the duties we owe one to another, as parents or children, as husbands or wives. Whatever, then, in this matter, thy hand findeth to do, that do with all thy might and all thy diligence, for there is no knowledge, work or device in the grave, whether thou art fast going. If, then, you who are children, shall be stirred up to honour, from this day henceforth, your parents more highly than ever you have yet done ; and

if you who are parents shall be stirred up to perform those sacred and solemn duties you owe to your children, more faithfully in all time coming, than at any time past; if the husband will be stirred up to a more faithful discharge of the duties of a husband, and the wife to a more faithful discharge of the duties of a wife; so that when the sad and solemn hour of separation, which is surely coming to all, has come, amid its blackness and its bitterness, there shall be no root of regret and remorse in the remembrance of the past, and in reviewing the history of that relationship which by the hand of death has now been severed for ever; if, we say, you shall be stirred up to such a discharge of the duties you owe one to another, by means of the reflections to which this withered leaf may give rise, we shall have no cause of regret that we have directed your attention to this topic on this day.

It is not enough, however, that we direct your attention to the death of others, let us direct it to your own. By this withered leaf, you are instructed not only in the *nature*, but in the *certainty* of death.

Nothing is more certain than the fading of the leaf: equally certain is death. When we speak of the certainty of death, we speak, it is evident, not of its certainty as to time or manner: than these nothing is more uncertain. The seasons have their time of coming and going, and we know when they will come and go; the passage-birds have their appointed time, and we know when they will come and when they will depart; the leaf has its time to flourish and its time to fade, and we know when it will flourish and when it will fade. It is otherwise with death: "Man knoweth not its time." I am old, said Jacob, yet I know not the day of my death: equally uncertain is death, as to the manner of its coming. Amid all this uncertainty, however, one thing is certain—death itself. What is our life, indeed, but a constant dying—a death in life. The moment we begin to live, that moment we begin to die. I am dying while I now speak, and you are dying while you hear: every breath we take to lengthen life, shortens it; and the more we live, the less we have to live: thus do we fade as a leaf. These you may think are stale and common-place remarks. We confess they are: frequently have they been made, and frequently have they been heard; yet, frequently though such remarks respecting death and its certainty have been made, how few of you have even yet given

it that consideration which its paramount importance demands! Though day unto day utters speech; though night unto night teaches man knowledge; though in every new-made grave that meets our eye; though in every newspaper that we read; though in every funeral procession we are summoned to attend, or that we see dragging its slow and sable length along our streets; though in every funeral bell that tolls the departure of another and another to the tomb; though all nature enters, as it were for our sakes, once every year into a state of death; though at this moment every sound that meets the ear, and every sight that meets the eye, is eloquent of death; though in all these we have solemn utterances and stern assurances of our approaching dissolution; yet how few of us realize this approach, so as to consider and to provide against its issues! Every species of arithmetic we will learn, but that of counting our days; every species of economy we will study, but that of setting our house in order, seeing we must die and not live. So certain is death, it might be thought that the first and great concern of all must be to provide against its approach and its issues; yet there is nothing of which we are more forgetful; yea, this very certainty of death, instead of fixing it in our thoughts, seems to make us but the more eager to escape from its consideration, as if our *not* thinking of its approach would alter its nature, or delay its coming. My brethren, are we in our senses? Will our blindness to danger diminish or prevent danger? Will we not die, because we never think of dying? Surely you cannot think this; you cannot but know that death is advancing, and that every effort you make to exclude it from your thoughts, does in effect but bring it the nearer! To know our danger, believe it, my brethren, is the first step of safety; to prepare for its approach, to provide for its issues, when inevitable, is the highest act of wisdom. The prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; it is the simple only that pass on, and are punished. Let the forewarnings of nature, then, be your forearnings; let not this season pass by unimproved; listen to the voice of nature. The voice of nature is the voice of God! God speaks to us from the dust as well as from the pulpit; and if hitherto you have lived as men who were *not* to die, live henceforth as men who *are*—to die—in the full foreknowledge of the fact, live under its full influence: and that the know-

ledge of death's certainty and death's solemnity may issue in life's sanctity, so may you seek and find, and so help you God.

Again, while this "withered leaf" instructs us in the *certainty*, it instructs us also in the *universality* of death.

We must, said the woman of Tekoah, *all die*, and be as water spilt on the ground. That we must all die requires no reasoning to prove; sufficient is it for us to appeal to experience. Since the birth of time, how many human beings have been born into time? Time still continues, but where are those who, during its past ages, have, with their names and their actions, filled its records? The stream of time still continues to wind, but where are those who have dwelt upon its banks? We have mighty forests, and crowded cities, but where are the hands that planted the one, or that built the other? We have books written many centuries ago, but where are those by whom they were written, and those whose actions or whose lives they record? Like an aged mother, the earth still remains, but where are her children? our fathers, where are they—and the prophets, do they live for ever? We have all occupied a portion of the past, but where are those who occupied it along with us? Where are the busy hands, and where the burning hearts; where are the gleaming eyes; where are the melting voices; where are the "old familiar faces?" Ah! the busy hands are motionless; the burning hearts are cold; the gleaming eyes are dim; the melting voices are silent; and the "old familiar faces are gone." Lover, acquaintance, and friend, have been removed into darkness. A thousand times has that dark and dream-like past been peopled with the living—living forms and living voices; and a thousand times has it been emptied again. A thousand times has the earth brought forth children, and a thousand times has she been bereaved; the grave has received the a, and the grave will receive us—the grave that receives all—the grave that is never satisfied, and that never says, It is enough: thus,

*Like leaves on trees the race of man is found,
Now green in youth, now withering on the ground,
Another race the following age supplies;
They fall successive, and successive rise:
So generations in their course decay;
So flourish those when those have passed away.*

In conclusion, as the text instructs us in the *nature*, *certainty*, and *universality* of death, it instructs us also in its *cause*.

Were we to enter into a country almost

deserted of its inhabitants; were we to witness on every hand villages and towns laid in ruins—fields, that had been ripe even unto harvest, trampled down, and soaked with blood—wells choked up, and rivers polluted with the bodies of the slain—the erections of human ingenuity dismantled and overthrown—we would naturally ask, How has all this come to pass; how has this beautiful country become the scene of such terrible calamities? When we witness the earth, in like manner, with its three kingdoms, the vegetable, the animal, and the rational, full of corruption, decay and death, and contrast it as originally full of health, and beauty, and life; standing as we do, in a world intended to be a region of life—amid the chambers of the dying, and the sepulchres of the dead; it is natural to inquire, How has this come to pass; how has pain entered into the region of pleasure; sorrow into the region of joy; decay, corruption, and death, into the regions of beauty and life? Why is it that we, who were created in the image of our Maker, do all "fade as a leaf?" Why is it that we are born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward? Why is our sure and sad inheritance suffering, and sorrow, and death? The answer to these questions, the solution of these difficulties, is contained in the text: "Our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

These are the consequences of which sin is the cause; these are the wrecks of a beautiful and blessed world, of which sin is the author. In what light, then, are we to regard sin? Has it corrupted all that was pure; has it defaced all that was beautiful in this lower world; has it filled all things with the seeds of decay and death; has it brought us under the entire and everlasting forfeiture of God's favour; has it exposed us to his wrath and his curse, not only through all this life, but through all the life that is to come; has it dug a dishonoured grave for our bodies; has it kindled an intolerable and an everlasting fire for our souls; has it wrought us all this wreck; has it proved to us the source of so many and so mighty woes; and shall we love it; shall we live in its love; shall we live willingly under its power; shall we not rather hate it, weep over it, forsake it? Has God provided a salvation for us; has he proclaimed and proffered it to us—a salvation from its guilt, its pollution, its power, its curse, its very being? How should we regard the offer of this salvation; an

made to the most abandoned and the most depraved, the most worthless and the most wicked of mankind—made to them irrespective of all merit, and all condition of any personal having, and of any personal doing—an offer of Christ's salvation for Christ's sake. How should we treat? Should we not, the moment it is offered, that moment accept it, and that with all the gratitude and the joy a boon of such a kind, provided for and proffered to persons of our character, and in our condition, is so well fitted to produce? Is it to be conceived that it should be treated otherwise? Is it to be conceived, not that it should be rejected, but that it should not be received, with this gratitude and this joy? See yon criminal on the scaffold; the preparations of death proceed. A messenger, proclaiming his errand lest he should come too late, forces a way through the crowd. A pardon! a pardon! resounds from every voice. When that sound reaches the ear of the criminal, how does it affect his heart? When a sealed pardon from royalty is unfolded, is put into his hands, how does he regard it, how does he treat it—with apathy, with neglect? See how he clasps his hands; see the hues of life returning to his cheek; see the wild but joyful light that sparkles in his eyes; see how his heart heaves; see that look of wild and delighted wonderment, as if he feared that the sights meeting his eye, and the sounds meeting his ear, were the sights and sounds of a delusive dream! Thus eagerly, thus gratefully, is the pardon received which restores the criminal to a suffering, sorrowful, and short existence in this world. With how much greater eagerness and gratitude ought that pardon to be accepted, which restores us to life eternal! Yet, to how many has this pardon been offered in vain! By how

many is the salvation of the Gospel—a salvation provided by the love of God, purchased by the blood of Christ, and applied by the love of the Spirit—a salvation which redeems us from the pains, the pollutions, and the punishments of hell, which exalts us to the dignities and the glories of heaven; by how many is this salvation neglected and despised; hitherto has it been neglected; hitherto has it been refused by you? Yet it may be accepted; for yet it is offered. You are guilty, and you may be willing to remain guilty; you are depraved, and you are willing to remain depraved; you are lost, and lost you are willing to remain. Yet, however, God is not willing; yet he has not ratified your choice; yet the most guilty may be pardoned; the most depraved may be renewed; the most lost may be saved. This salvation are you willing now to accept—this salvation as a *whole*, and for Christ's sake? You now must either accept it, or reject it; *not* to accept it, know this, is to reject it. The consequences of this rejection are you willing or prepared to abide? It is a common saying, that “*it will be all one* an hundred years hence.” Ay, ay, it will be *all one* as to the honours and the distinctions of time; it will be *all one* as to its glimmer and glory; *all one* whether you have been rich, or whether you have been poor; *all one* whether you have been a wandering beggar, or a crowned king; but when a thousand years have come and gone, will it be *all one* whether that thousand years has been spent amid the sanctities and the glories of heaven, or amid the pollutions and the pains of hell. Oh! no, that will not be *all one*. As it will not be *all one* then, neither is it *all one now*; for, according to your “sowing” here, will be, and must be, your “reaping” hereafter.

THE CONSOLATIONS OF THE GOSPEL;

A Sermon preached by the Rev. JOHN SOMERVILLE, D.D.—Concluded.

ANOTHER fertile source of consolation which the Gospel opens up to the mind is this, that it has brought life and immortality to light. It has promised a life of never-ending felicity to all its genuine disciples; not that previous to the promulgation of Christianity mankind had no notion of a

future life, for wherever man has been found, notions about this have prevailed; but to have notions of a thing, and to have clear and distinct notions, are very different. As the Scriptures express it, life and immortality have been *brought to light* by the Gospel. Even to the exploring eye of

ancient philosophy, futurity was seen but as through clouds and darkness. Till the coming of Christ, faint and ambiguous was the light that shone from the other world ; nor could it afford that steady influence which yields consolation to the heart, and fortitude under distress : all was comparatively dark and gloomy till the Sun of righteousness arose. Till that auspicious day no solid ground could be discovered on which piety or virtue could set her foot. Men were driven darkly down the tide of time, and, without a beacon to point their way, or a haven to which to direct their course, they were launched into the ocean of eternity. Notwithstanding the carefulness of reason and the longing of humanity till the coming of Christ, futurity was rather only probable than certain. Such is the remote intercourse we have with the spiritual world, such the profound silence in which every thing is kept with regard to it, that, perhaps, nothing but a revelation from heaven is capable of putting all anxiety at rest on this important subject. Futurity is not an object of any of our senses. We cannot see it. The mansions of departed spirits are not laid open to our astonished sight. None that died ever returned to this world with tidings from the other, to tell us how they fared in their last, long journey, and what reception they met with at the end of it. It was reserved for the Gospel alone to set all anxiety at rest on this important subject, and to free it from those distracting doubts and bewildering perplexities with which it was accompanied in the bosoms of the wisest men in the most polished ages. Now, there is something in the idea of annihilation, in the utter extinction of our being, in being blotted out for ever from existence, and being as if we had never been, so appalling to the human mind, that it withers up all that is generous and noble in our nature, and sinks her down to the very dust we tread on. Such an idea makes havoc of all our affections, and tarnishes all the fair prospects of man. To bid a final adieu to this world, to the friends of our bosoms, and the partners of our joys and our sorrows ; to shut our eyes for ever on the faces of men and the light of day ; to behold no more the glorious sun, nor the moon, nor the stars, nor the clouds ; to go from all these scenes familiar to our view, consecrated in memory and endeared to the heart ; to feel the whole sensations of life about to be extinguished—the icy hand of death about to force our

struggling nature away, to bear us out of life and day, and to fling us into the dark and dismal tomb of annihilation : there is something in this idea that freezes our very soul to think of, and that spreads over all our sensations the most appalling and the most dismal gloom. Here, then, the Gospel comes to our aid. It has for ever solved the great problem of futurity, and has poured a flood of light on the destiny of man and the world beyond the tomb. Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep. In the grave we can trace the footsteps of our great Master who has robbed it of its terror, and death of its sting. Now may every Christian sing—"Oh, grave, where is thy victory ! oh, death, where is thy sting !" "Thanks be unto God who hath given us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Now there are trials and sufferings in the life of man for which this world has no remedy. There are varieties of life and circumstances of fortune in which our happiness must be drawn entirely from futurity. When the friends with whom we set out in life are hid from us in the grave ; when we seem to live in a land of strangers ; when we hardly recognise one known face, or meet with one kindred soul ; when the eyes that never beamed upon us but with love are for ever closed, and the hearts that never throbbed towards us but with affection have ceased to beat for ever, then is the time that man looks forward to futurity with an anxious and exploring eye, and that the light of the Gospel comes home to his heart as the light of morning to the weary traveller—as the sight of the peaceful haven to the tempest-beaten mariner.

Another fertile source of consolation I now mention—but I can only mention it—is the assurance that is given in the provision that the Gospel has made for the forgiveness of sin and acceptance with our Maker. If we reason on the subject, punishment is the natural concomitant of guilt, unless a third party is pleased to remove it. Repentance, which in this case is the only remedy which nature holds out, is not sufficient ; and if it were, how are we to know that it is so, if revelation is silent ? Here revelation comes to solve our doubts, and set our minds at rest. If we reason from analogy, our case is frequently most hopeless. In the present state of things, the guilt must frequently be expiated by the punishment of the offender. On such a subject as our eternal condition, this must be awful indeed

to every serious, reflecting man. It must tend to disturb his peace, obscure his hopes, and blight his prospects. The sufferings arising from a sense of guilt and fear of punishment, are often the most appalling that can rend the human bosom. When a sense of sin oppresses the soul; when guilt is incurred, and the conscience is wounded, this world fades apace, and the next comes forward to view in all its reality. This is the time when the value of our religion is known. It tells us, and tells us authoritatively, and in such a way that there is no room to doubt it, that God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses—that we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin—that God is not only willing to receive the returning penitent, but anxious for his return—that this is the whole scope of what Jesus came to establish by his life and doctrine, to finish by his death on the cross and powerful intercession at the right hand of God—that whatever may be the means of God's forgiving sin in Christ Jesus, the fact is plain. If we be the genuine disciples of Christ, God stands forth as our Father and Friend—at tends us through life—watches over us at death, and opens up to us immortality. Actuated by these noble and sublime views, opened up by the christian religion, what have not her votaries borne, and what are they not capable of bearing! Other principles are too often found but temporary and inefficient, and desert men in the hour of trial. By these of which we are now speaking, arising from firm belief in a superintending Providence, the watchful care of the Almighty, faith in the forgiveness of sin, and future happiness—by these are fortitude inspired, and calmness and peace of mind generated. A proper understanding, and right application of such principles as these, support all those who believe them in the hour of trouble; they enable them to combat with success amid their most determined enemies. What can force a tear from the eye, or a murmur from the lips, or a groan from the bosom of that man who believes firmly that God Almighty is his friend—that his omnipotence is on his side—that that Being who can conquer all his enemies, will support him in all his trials, extricate him from all difficulties, and make even calamities turn to his advantage in time and through eternity! Religion exempts us not from the evils of life, but it inspires us with forti-

tude to bear them with submission, and with a firm belief, that they are intended for our good, to turn us to virtue, and lead us to glory.

Let us now apply the subject in a few words with a special reference to the circumstances that have this night called us together. Are we the disciples of that religion, whose benign genius and direct scope it is, by the doctrine it unfolds, by the precepts it gives, and the dispositions it implants, to soothe the sorrows, to buoy up the spirits, and relieve the distresses of many? Let us endeavour to co-operate with its benign tendency, and thus become fellow-workers with God, for the good of our brethren. This can be done in various ways; by applying the consolation they require, by sympathizing in their sorrows, by giving the relief pointed out by our heavenly Father. To our words of comfort must our sympathies be joined, and to our sympathies our deeds. Would we co-operate with the benign genius and merciful tendency of our religion, then coldly and selfishly we must not stand aloof from a brother in distress. Our sympathy must not be of that sentimental, sickly kind which exhausts itself in feeling; it must not be that which is chilled by ungrateful returns, or repressed by a froward opposition; it must be of that steady kind which consists, in very deed and truth, in entering with feeling and ardour into the concerns of men. It is appalled by no danger; it is that which no ingratitude could cool, and no opposition can defeat. We cannot always remove distress, but we can show a disposition to remove it. We can impart advice, and soothe and alleviate at least, if we cannot always remove distress. Let us do what we can; more is not required. Amid the various claims to our sympathy and relief, none are more frequent in their appeal, or knock at our hearts with a louder call, than those of poverty. How many do we see doomed to trouble that is heavy, reduced from affluence to dependence; and who, when their hearts are sad at the remembrance of better days, endeavour to conceal, under the borrowed smile of cheerfulness and gaiety, the sorrow that lurks within, and weighs down their sinking spirit? How often do we see the wound of the broken in heart; how often do we behold the weeping widow, and the wailing orphan, the unprotected mother, and the helpless infant! Our blessed Saviour has told us, that the poor you have always with you; and

hearken to the command to supply their wants, and to the rewards promised for doing so. If there be among you a poor man within any of thy gates, thou shalt not harden thy heart, or shut thy hand against thy poor brother; thou shalt open thy hand wide unto him, and surely give him sufficient for his need, and that what he wanteth. Hear the words of our blessed Master: "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, sick, and in prison, and ye came unto me;" and he adds, "inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

A few words touching the institution which has now called you together. This benevolent Institution was instituted in 1824, and, since that period, it has been blessed with an extraordinary extent of usefulness—having given relief to 3,543 destitute females; and then, as a most gratifying fact connected with its state, I am authorized to say that, in these nine years since its foundation, there have only been 9 deaths; just one to 393. Do not these facts speak volumes for the way in which this Institution has been managed? There is one gentleman whose name must be mentioned here. The whole of this Institution is conducted by Dr. Thatcher and his assistants, and the facts I have mentioned, say much in favour of his skill and humanity. Another most striking fact, to which much

good is owing, is the care and attention bestowed upon it by many christian matrons. Their hearts are in it. They pay visits to these starving females, go round the neighbourhood, and assist by personal examination as to the distresses of the occasion? and, having done so, provide food and clothing, and aid of every kind. Moral and spiritual instruction is not neglected; and, in many cases, the labours of pious and christian ministers are administered to these destitute people. Surely this is a case made out for your charity. For the last two years, however, the funds have been diminishing considerably, and, in consequence of the diminution, the managers are obliged considerably to restrict the assistance they give, both in food and in clothing. I am not aware that it has yet been restricted in medical assistance, for all that assistance is purely gratuitous. It were a pity that such an Institution as this should sink and go down. It has been, under Providence, the means of a great quantity of good; and I am instructed to say, that many valuable lives have been saved by the prompt assistance brought to these destitute females. I hope your liberal contributions this night will decide that the Institution is not to go down—that it shall long live to be a blessing to the neighbourhood, and an honour to this metropolis of our country.

The Doctor concluded his eloquent discourse, by the recital of some affecting cases of individual distress.

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To whom all Communications should be addressed.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 8TH MARCH, 1834.

102.

SERMON by the Rev. ANDREW GILMOUR, Greenock.
SERMON by the Rev. STEVENSON M'GILL, D.D., Glasgow.

Price 2d.

THE CHOICE OF MOSES;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THE 2D FEBRUARY, 1834,

By the Rev. ANDREW GILMOUR,

Minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Greenock.

"Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God."—HEB. xi. 25.

Moses, the son of Amram and Jochebed, was born in Egypt, in A. M. 2433, 1571 years before the Christian era. His parents were of the tribe of Levi. He had a brother, who was called Aaron, three years older than himself; and he had a sister, who was named Miriam, who was about ten years older. A little before the birth of Moses, Pharaoh, the king, had ordered that all the male children of the Israelites should be put to death as soon as they were born. This cruel decree was avowedly for the purpose of crippling the growing energies of those men, whose affection he had forfeited by oppression, whose services he still wished to retain, but whose obedience he could command only by the power of the sword. The parents of Moses could not comply with this severe law. When he was born, he was concealed for the period of three months in the house, and, when concealment was considered to be no longer possible, they made a small cradle of rushes, and hid him among the flags on the banks of the Nile. But, in this retired spot, he was discovered by Thermutis, the very daughter of the king, who had come to the river for the purpose of bathing, and who had chosen the place near which Moses lay, on account of its privacy. When she discovered the cradle of rushes, she ordered her maidens to bring it, and when it was opened, "the babe wept." "And she had compassion on the child, and she said, This is one of the He-

brews' children." At this critical moment, his sister, Miriam, who had been standing afar off watching him, approached the princess, and proposed, with great innocence, simplicity, and archness, that she would go and procure a nurse for the babe. The proposal was instantly embraced, and the delighted girl soon had his own mother on the spot. "And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." There was no difficulty in closing this bargain. It is merely added, that "the woman took the child, and nursed it." She nursed him, not because it was the wish of the princess, neither was it because she valued the wages that were offered as her hire; but she nursed him because he was her own boy. And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses, which, in the Egyptian language, signifies one drawn out of the water. Clemens Alexandrinus tells us, that he had the ablest masters in Egypt to instruct him in all the arts and the sciences, and all that belonged to the language and the writings of the Egyptians. Philo says, that Grecians were sent for to instruct him in the liberal sciences—that the Assyrians taught him their learning, and that the Egyptians made him acquainted with their symbolic philosophy. But, while he was thus carefully instructed in all the learning of Egypt, and

of other countries, his mother seems to have been a faithful nurse to a far nobler employer than Thermutis, the princess, for a far greater reward than the wages which she offered, and with far better success than those who succeeded her in this important charge. She instructed him soundly in the principles of the Jewish religion, and she sent him forth to the world too firm to be shaken by its storms—too stern to be overawed by its frowns—too virtuous to be seduced by its pleasures—too intelligent to be misled by its smiles, and too vigilant to be deceived by its calms. Accordingly, “when he came to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.”

In making a few remarks upon this choice, we would say,

I. That it evinced great self-denial.

If Moses had been the adopted son of the poorest and the meanest of the Egyptians, he would have been highly elevated above the oppressed and the degraded Israelites. And his leaving the ease and the comfort of such a situation, for the purpose of sharing the fate and the fortune of his despised brethren, would have been a proof of high moral courage, and of invincible principle. But, instead of this, he occupied a station second only to his who sat upon the throne. He was the adopted son of Pharaoh’s daughter, and a favourite with the king. His residence was in a palace, where every thing was to be enjoyed that could amuse the eye, or delight the ear, or gratify the heart. Every thing that riches could command was at his perfect control. His companions were the most polished and cultivated men of the age, and they paid him that respect which his high station demanded. He had access to the inexhaustible fountains of literature and of science, and he was no stranger to the happiness which the pure triumphs of intellect afford. Occupying the highest civil station in the empire, he was also advanced to the highest military honours, if we can credit Josephus, the Jewish historian. Yet, under all these circumstances, his heart is with his oppressed, and despised, and enslaved countrymen. He despised the pleasures of a court, for the still greater luxury of doing good;

he relinquished the enjoyments of a fine mind, a cultivated taste, and a splendid imagination, cradled in affluence, and trained by the living voice of philosophy—he relinquished all this, for the still loftier rewards of morality and religion; he turned a deaf ear to the voice of ambition, which promised him the royal robe, the sceptre, and the crown; and, at that very age when the heart may be supposed to beat highest with the pulse of worldly grandeur, “he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” He saw, and was convinced of the utter vanity of all worldly glory; and, with great cordiality of feeling, he could pronounce upon it the verdict of the wise man: “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” Nor can it be said of Moses, what has been sneeringly declared of Solomon by the disciples of Kant and the shallow imitators of Voltaire, that he renounced the pleasures of this world only when his infirmities unfitted him for enjoying them. He was now in the vigour of his youth, and in all the prime of his manhood. And so far was he from suffering under the ravages of disease, that, eighty years after this period, when he had led the Israelites through the wilderness, brought them to the plains of Moab; when he had been exposed to all the anxieties peculiar to his difficult charge, and when he had borne the burden and the heat of the day for forty years with them in the desert—even then it was declared of him, that “his eye was not dim, neither was his natural force abated.”

Have you the moral courage and the self-denial to do what Moses did? You cannot refuse, like him, to be called the son of a princess, or the successor to a throne. But, have you the self-denial and the moral fortitude of character to be perfectly satisfied with the humble station in which Providence has placed you? Is it your aim to use this world as not abusing it, and to devote to his glory those talents with which you are intrusted? If these are your sentiments, then you will have no hesitation in making the very same choice that Moses did: “choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” *

II. The choice of Moses displays singular resolution.

The natural temper of men leads them to seek with great avidity the riches and the

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honours of this world ; and the same principle disposes them to shut out eternity from their calculations, and to overlook its important interests. They are habitually “lovers of pleasures, rather than lovers of God ; having a form of godliness, but denying its power.” They prefer the pleasures of time and of sense to those enjoyments that last for evermore ; they are much better pleased with those empty titles which one man confers upon another, than with those dignities to which the Spirit of the living God exalts us, when he “washes us in the Saviour’s blood, and makes us kings and priests unto God.” They are far prouder of the vain pageantry of an earthly name, at which the vulgar gaze, and by which the ignorant are held in awe, than they are of those true distinctions, into which the angels look with intense interest, and on account of which in heaven itself there is joy ; and they are much more solicitous about the possessions of this world, than they are about the “inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, eternal in the heavens.” Accordingly, they not only devote their own talents, and time, and influence, to accomplish their desires, but they educate their children in the very same principles. The great object which is set before the mind, is worldly distinction. We do not say that this is done in every country. We have reason to know that different nations choose very different objects of pursuit. The tattooed Indian can leave no better inheritance to his ignorant and savage posterity, than the fame of being the fleetest in the race, the most implacable in his resentment, the most cunning in his deceptions, and the most cruel in his wrath. The Spartan’s legacy to his children, was the shield that never knew retreat, the bow that turned not back, and the sword that returned not empty. The boast of the Jew was his descent from Abraham ; and the glory of the Roman name was written, by a stern philosophy, in the bloody characters of war. Our own ambition seems to consist in the possession of titles, which ingenuity has invented—which worth, in some instances, has emboldened—which vanity, in all cases, has embraced, and which time and custom have consecrated and rendered venerable. And when we are cut off from the hope of such empty distinctions, our energies are turned to an aristocracy of wealth, as every way worthy of our supreme regard. Hence the unaccountable conduct of many

parents. When their children are about to enter into the busy scenes of secular life, their object does not for a moment seem to be to advance their moral and spiritual improvement, and to fit them for heaven. The question is never put ; or, if it is put, it seems to be easily answered : Whether or not they will be exposed to the infidel, the scoffer, the profane, and the immoral—whether or not they will be forced to associate with men who are totally destitute of religion, and whose entire conversation will train them to think lightly of God—whether or not their profession will lead them to neglect personal and family religion—to be irregular in their lives—to profane the Sabbath, and to neglect the public worship of God. The great object with many seems to be, to choose for their children that profession which will soonest secure for them worldly independence, whatever that profession may be, and to place them under the care of those men who will most certainly raise them into commercial importance, whatever may be their moral and religious standing in society. As for personal or family religion, it is an idea greatly too vulgar to be even very desirable ! And to be much taken up with religion—to be regular in praying to God in secret—to attend to the duty of family worship, and to think much about heaven—all this may be very well in clergymen, and in a few of their weak-minded, well-meaning, and harmless admirers ; but it is quite incompatible with their worldly advancement, and inconsistent with their habits as gentlemen !

How different were the sentiments of Moses ! how different his resolution ! how different was his conduct ! Yes, and we may justly add, how different was his reward ! Nursed in the halls of luxury, and dandled in the lap of pleasure—trained in the school of ambition, and enjoying all the sunshine of military renown—the adopted son of a princess from his infancy, and the undisputed heir of Egypt’s throne, he yet voluntarily rejected all for the sake of religion. He found that he could not induce the Egyptians to renounce their idolatry, and to adopt the Jewish religion ; he saw plainly that he must either renounce the path of ambition, or forsake his duty to his God. He, therefore, with singular resolution, “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter ; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to dwell in the tents of sin.”

Do you approve of the choice that Moses made? Was it better to separate himself from the Egyptians than to forsake the people of God? and was it better to renounce the throne of Pharaoh than to forfeit his title to the crown of righteousness, to the throne of heaven, and to the kingdom of God? You, then, must make the same choice—you must display the very same resolution, and you must adopt the very same line of conduct, if you have any wish to enjoy the same reward. The same resolution is necessary now, in connecting yourselves with the people of God, that was necessary when Moses took his important step. You will be exposed to the ridicule of those who can laugh at your religion—who will mock at your conscientious scruples, and who will point with the finger of scorn at your principles, which they do not understand, merely because they have no better argument wherewith to assail you. They despise the devotion of the closet, because they never felt the luxury of secret prayer. They neglect the duty of family worship, because they never knew its benign influence over the heart and the affections; they contemn every thing like regularity in attending on the house of God; and they despise every thing that includes more than external decency while there, because they know of no other religion than that of occupying a seat at church, and they are acquainted with no higher principle than that of expediency and of personal convenience. It will require resolution, therefore, and great resolution too, to resist the influence of custom, the allurements of the world, the prejudices of friends, the opposition of enemies, the laugh of the vulgar, the ridicule of the ignorant, and the mockery of the profane, in casting in your lot with the people of God: “Therefore be ye stedfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.”

III. The choice of Moses displays calm and cool deliberation on the most painful consequences of such a choice.

When Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, when he contemned the offer of the throne, and when he left the Egyptian court for the abodes of the despised Israelites, he did that which involved the most important consequences. The motives by which he was actuated, could neither be explained nor understood;

and his high moral principle exposed him to the worst and the basest constructions. He insulted the princess, he outraged the royal favour, and he poured contempt upon the whole courtiers of the land. And the wrath which would now run high against him would bear some proportion to the love which adopted him as a son—to the condescension which designed him for a throne, and to the obsequious loyalty which was ready to acknowledge him as a king. These were consequences which Moses could not overlook in coming to such a resolution, and they were every way calculated to excite the deepest feelings of regret. Instead of his conduct being imputed to the true motives by which he was actuated, he knew that it would be traced to principles to which he was an utter stranger. Nor could he vindicate himself; he was gone, and vile ingratitude was stamped upon his character.

Nor were these the only difficulties which would present themselves to his generous mind. He was offering his services to men who scarcely knew the sacrifices which he was making—who could not appreciate his exertions on their behalf, and who could scarcely derive any advantage from them. He brought nothing of the influence of his former station with him, but he was at once plunged into all the difficulties of the one which he had adopted. He joined himself to those who were slaves, and who were the slaves of those whom he had so grievously enraged. He adopted their trials, and toils, and troubles, and hardships, aggravated as they now would be by the deep resentment which his conduct would incur. These were the direct and the immediate consequences of his choice; they were far too palpable for such a man as Moses was, not to perceive; and they were far too important for him not to consider. Yet, notwithstanding all this, he calmly and deliberately “chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”

Such should be the principles by which you are actuated in making a profession of religion now. If you are under the influence of less worthy motives, if you make a profession of religion merely because it is customary, then you will change your religion with the country which you visit—you will be a Presbyterian in Scotland, an Episcopalian in England, a Mahometan in Turkey, and a Pagan in Hindostan. If your profession of religion is not founded on real principle, if

it is not guided by solid information, and if it is not animated by love to the truth, then there is no stability in your character. The slightest circumstance will make you change your profession—personal convenience, disagreements betwixt you and your brethren, or misunderstandings betwixt you and your minister. If your principles are ridiculed, if the cause which you have espoused is held up to scorn, then you will shrink from a station which you have not learned to maintain, and you will yield to that mockery which your want of information unfits you to repel. It requires, therefore, calm and cool deliberation in making a profession of religion, in the present day. And we especially call the attention of our young friends to this important circumstance; not for the purpose of discouraging them, in the discharge of this imperative and pleasing duty, but for the purpose of preparing them for some of those difficulties to which they will be exposed. So far, indeed, are we from discouraging the young from making an early choice in this matter, that we would decidedly say, that as soon as we are capable of throwing off our allegiance to the Saviour, then we are capable of espousing his cause. And, as soon as we are capable of making such a choice, if an opportunity of doing so offers, it is our duty to do so. It is an axiom in moral science, that, when the ability of doing good is conferred, and when the opportunity is afforded, nothing more is necessary to constitute moral obligation. And it is just upon this general principle that we would press upon the young the propriety, to say nothing of the advantages and the loveliness, of devoting themselves early to God. And, with all the disadvantages of making a choice similar to that of Moses, notwithstanding all the unmannly and the ungenerous abuse that the worldly-minded heap upon those who are conscientious in their attachment to the Saviour, we would remind you that the promises of God are made only to his friends, and to those who espouse his cause. To those who make no profession of religion, there are no promises given. Whenever you are capable, therefore, it is the duty of every one to espouse the cause of Christ, to enlist under the banners of the cross, and to enrol among the friends of the Redeemer. But, in doing so, you must expect to encounter many difficulties, to suffer much reproach, to feel many discouragements, and even to bear persecution. For

all this Moses was fully prepared, and he was not disappointed in his expectations. No sooner did he exert himself to promote their interests, than even they, whose cause he had espoused, rudely repulsed his kind interference, by asking, "Who made thee a ruler or judge over us?" If Moses had been influenced by no higher principles in espousing their cause than the mere formalist in religion, this surely would have driven him from them. But, he had counted the cost before he began to build; he had calmly and coolly contemplated the most painful consequences of such a step; he was acting under the influence of high and invincible moral principle; nothing, therefore, could abate his attachment, or quench his ardour, or subdue his energy. We too, must act a similar part; and, casting ourselves entirely upon God, we must "choose even to suffer affliction with the people of God, should that await us, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

IV. The choice of Moses displays early attention to religion.

The Apostle here tells us, that, when Moses came to years, he made this choice, which fully warrants us in concluding, that he had given very early attention to this matter. He considered the subject in all its bearings, and he traced out its consequences, in time and eternity—in the life that now is and in that which is to come. And the result of this investigation was the choice which is here recorded. We enjoy far greater privileges than ever Moses knew. The rites and the ceremonies of the Jewish religion were a very imperfect representation of the scheme of mercy. And, however perfectly his parents might instruct him in these, they were not in themselves calculated to make a very lasting impression upon the mind, the sign being so very unlike the thing signified—the blood of bulls and of goats, bearing no relation whatever to the blood of the divine Immanuel; and their ceremonial purifications being only darkly symbolical of the "washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit." Nor can we overlook the circumstance, that he soon lost all the advantages of early instruction, and of good example, by being taken to the court of Pharaoh, mingling constantly with those who would scoff at the worship of the true God, and witnessing daily their idol worship. We, on the contrary, are taught to look back to the incarnation, the life, and the sacri-

ficial death of Christ, as a part of recorded history, instead of a part of those prophecies which were darkly unfolded, or of those ceremonies which were imperfectly understood. Our religious instruction commences in infancy, it is prosecuted in maturer years, and it is continued till the close of existence. We are, no doubt, under the necessity of attending to the secular affairs of life: we may, like Moses, give our attention to the arts and the sciences, but the religion of the family and of the closet withdraws the mind from the world, and places the affections on God; and, on the weekly Sabbath, secular employment of every kind is forbidden, and the day is devoted to the services of the sanctuary. This prevails in our own country in a more perfect manner than in any other. The Puritans in England contended earnestly for the observance of the Sabbath-day. Our reforming ancestors adopted their sentiments on this subject; and the long and the severe struggle in which they were involved in defending their civil and religious liberty, strengthened their attachment to the Sabbath-day. This, however, is the only country where the whole day is devoted to the private and the public exercises of religion. In England, there is an unhappy distinction made betwixt the hours of divine service, and the rest of the day. The same law extends to Ireland. Even in Holland, which is considered by many as strictly Sabbatarian, buying and selling on that holy day has always obtained. Indeed, the practice of remembering the Sabbath-day to keep it holy, has never been extensively countenanced beyond these islands, except by the descendants of the Puritans, who were driven from England, who abandoned Holland on account of their non-observance of the Sabbath, and who ultimately settled in America. We are thus placed in far more favourable circumstances for attending to religion than Moses enjoyed, or than any nation in the world now possesses. We are not only soundly instructed in the principles of the reformation, but the practice of religion is commended to our warmest regard by the holy example, the happy life, and the triumphant death of those men, whose character has been formed in the mould of the Gospel, and whose conduct has been regulated by the principles of Jesus. Mark thou the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is, indeed, peace.

But if it was the duty of Moses to give early attention to religion, and, when he came to years, to make such an honourable choice, the duty is just as incumbent upon us as it was upon him; and the consequences will be the same to both. We may have no opportunity of running such a splendid career, of occupying such an important station, and of overcoming such great difficulties; yet, if we enter the service of God, we shall suffer persecution; we shall have frequent opportunities of exercising the same faith, and patience, and hope; and we shall often be brought to the test, to see whether or not our principles were correct, when, like him, we choose to separate ourselves from the world, and to associate with the people of God. But if we make the same choice, and if we act up to it with the unbending firmness of this honourable man, we shall also enjoy his commendation, and receive his everlasting reward.

In concluding our discourse, we would,

1. Notice the great folly of those men who prefer the pleasures of sin to the enjoyments of religion.

They who have not sufficient moral courage to connect themselves with the people of God, lest they should share their obloquy, afflictions, and sufferings; but who, on the contrary, choose a sinful, or an irreligious life, because it exempts them from all such inconveniences, and permits them to indulge in all their lusts—they who do so, are guilty of a capital error in their calculations. All the pleasures and the enjoyments of sin are mixed and imperfect. A man of the world may make a great show of mirth and of pleasure, but "even in laughter, the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness." It is impossible that there can be real pleasure in sin; for wherever sin is, there is guilt; and wherever guilt is, there is shame arising from the apprehension of discovery, and fear arising from the dread of punishment. But whenever such mingled emotions as these are brought into operation, there can be no real satisfaction, there can be no pleasure. And even this negative kind of pleasure is bought at an awful price. Eternity is forfeited for such temporary enjoyments; and the soul is lost for the sake of such a miserable recompence.

2. Those men are wise who make the same choice that Moses did.

Religion may, and will, expose every one who chooses it, to much petty persecution,

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and sometimes to serious losses in this world. But "these light afflictions are but for a moment; and they work out for us a far more, an exceeding, an eternal weight of glory." Look, too, to the positive reward of religion, and we shall be constrained to admire the wisdom of him who chose to cast in his lot among the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Religion gives us the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, even in this life, which the world cannot bestow; it gives calmness and tranquillity in the hour of death, which the world cannot purchase; and it introduces us at last to those pleasures that last for evermore, which the world shall never enjoy. Where, then, is the man who would not make the very same choice that Moses did? What is Egypt to Moses now—what is its throne—and what are all its pleasures? Her sceptre is broken,

her glory is tarnished, and her diadem adorns the brow of a slave. Gone are all her Pharaohs and her Ptolemies, her Caesars and her Caliphs, with the generations of more than three thousand years; they are swept into the grave like the leaves of autumn. Not so that better part which Moses chose. More solid than Egypt's pyramids, which still survive the wreck of ages, and which are now the monuments of her ancient glory, that part shall never be taken away. He is now reaping the rich reward of his choice, and shall continue to enjoy its triumphs when Egypt shall be where her glory now is, and when this world, with its pleasures, shall be no more. Let us exercise the same prudence, and wisdom, and discretion; "choosing to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," having "respect to the recompense of the same reward."

ON CRUELTY TO ANIMALS:

A SERMON PREACHED BY DESIRE, IN ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, GLASGOW,

By the Rev. STEVENSON M'GILL, D.D.,

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'And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.'—GENESIS i. 26.

THE sacred historian directs our attention to two particulars by which man is distinguished from the inferior beings.

First, he states, that man was made after the image and likeness of God.

While possessing many principles similar to those of the inferior creation, man is endowed with powers and principles of a higher order, which form the distinguishing characteristics of his nature, and separate him from the other inhabitants of the earth. He is endowed with rational and moral powers; and is thus fitted for attaining superior knowledge, engaging in nobler exercises, and partaking of purer pleasures.

But the mere possession of an intellectual and moral nature gives not the full idea of the *image* and *likeness* of God. A corrupt being, however high his natural powers, does not possess the *divine likeness*. The likeness of God implies the powers and

affections of the soul, unclouded by sinful propensities; just in their order and strength; pure and holy in their tendencies and operations. Neither does the idea of a being created after the likeness of God present to us that of a being, such as some men in their low imaginations have conceived, who was more ignorant, destitute and miserable, than the savage of the wood; but that of a being distinguished by the divine favour—the object of parental regard; instructed by his merciful Creator in the knowledge suited to his nature and condition; and enabled to engage in the exercises, and fulfil the duties, which belong to his proper character, noble powers, and high destination.

Such is the idea which the Scriptures give of the nature and state of man, at the commencement of his existence. And though his nature be changed and corrupted

by sin, still the great line of distinction betwixt him and the lower animals continues: and even in ruins we see his original greatness.

But it is the **SECOND** peculiarity respecting man, which at this time must chiefly engage our attention. "And let him have dominion, it is said, over the fishes of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over the *cattle*, and over the wild beasts of the earth, (as the original word might be translated,) and over every reptile that creepeth upon the earth." Without this dominion, the condition of man would have been of all creatures the most wretched. The high qualities of his nature would have only made him more sensible to the misery of his subjection to the beings with whom he was surrounded; and he, who was the noblest, would have been the only creature out of his proper sphere and place upon earth.

I. This dominion God has made to arise from that mental superiority which constitutes our distinction and glory. Few creatures are brought into the world so helpless, or continue, during so long a period, dependent on others for the supply of their wants. Even after obtaining the full maturity of his powers, the body of man, though noble and beautiful in form, is still inferior in strength to many of those animals with which he is surrounded. The power of man is in his mind. From his intellectual and moral nature he derives his strength. The helplessness of infancy, is compensated by the experience, and wisdom, and strong affection of parents. Under their care the powers of his understanding are unfolded and exercised; useful knowledge is communicated; important habits are formed; and skill in the means of self-preservation and comfort is attained. Through his intellectual nature man also preserves, collects and arranges the knowledge and improvements of preceding generations, and adds to them the results of his own wisdom and experience. And, finally, from the same cause, he is enabled to form plans of co-operation, and to select and to arrange the means which are fittest to render him successful. Feeble as individuals, men become powerful by union.

It is seldom considered, also, that the benefit and extent of man's dominion is made to depend on the moral as well as the intellectual nature with which he was originally endowed. As in the societies of man, **just** and benevolent rulers, who maintain

the rights and secure the happiness of their subjects, render their power more permanent and extensive; so every man who exercises his power over the inferior animals with equity and kindness, best secures the benefit of their services. Subdued and attached, and rendered happy by kindness, they submit easily to our direction; and render, with ease and comfort, the services which are required of them. Nor irritated by injuries, are they tempted to inflict those severe retaliations for which God, for their protection, has given them the power.

As God has thus *fitted* man, by his superior nature, for dominion; so, on the other hand, he has given to the inferior animals a corresponding disposition to acknowledge man's superiority. Without this, the dominion of man would be a source of perpetual irritation and warfare. But, by this wise adaptation, it becomes to both parties, when it is rightly exercised, a source of various and mutual blessings.

Among those inferior beings, who move in the same element, and inhabit the same territory with mankind, some are connected with us by intimate relations, and are directly subservient to our service and comfort. Others, again, are connected with us only as forming a part of one great system. They live far from our society and presence; in the woods and wildernesses of nature; amidst burning sands or interminable snows; in the dark recesses of the mountains; or in the caverns of the sea-beat shores. But all of these, whatever be their variety of nature and condition, manifest in different ways their sense of the superiority of man. Some are adapted, by their native dispositions, for our service. Some display a stronger attachment to us than to their own species. They seek our society and notice; they rejoice in every mark of our approbation, and delight to be employed by us in services suited to their powers. Others, again, are obviously formed to assist us by their labours, to relieve our wants, and furnish us with various comforts. They submit with ease to our direction, and perform without murmuring the offices which we need. But those who are more remotely connected with us, acknowledge also our superiority. They retire from the place of our residence, and avoid interference with our plans. Even the fiercest and most powerful of them, retreat before the advances of the human race, and leave to them the possession of those territories

which once had been their own. And seldom, unless when urged by necessity or fear of assault, do they invade our dwellings, or contend with us for dominion.

Thus the comfort of man is evidently promoted when this dominion is wisely and justly exercised, according to the original design of the Creator. "The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered: the lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are for the price of the field." But the dominion of man, when justly exercised, is a mean of comfort also to the animals who are connected with him. Living in our society and neighbourhood, they become the objects of our care. Attached to our persons and homes, they feel pleasure in our service. They thus partake of our provision, and enjoy the advantage of our foresight. They have houses provided for their shelter; and they enjoy their blessings in security and abundance. Even the wild beasts of the field, who acknowledge our dominion by retiring before the progressive multiplication of our race, are rendered happier at a distance than if they contested our power. The fear of man is probably to them a blessing. The earth is composed of various parts, possessing various properties. Each of these is probably requisite for the consistency and stability of the whole. The sands of Africa have their use, and so have the high mountains. But every spot is also fitted for uses of a special order. There are beings fitted for the barren desert, as well as the fruitful field—for taking delight in the mountain's cliff, as well as in the flower-covered valley. The inhabitants of the wilderness, neither desire nor need society. Destined for the desert, the love of society would have been to them a source of misery. Their natures are better adapted to their condition, and they are happiest in solitude. To confine them to their lonely habitations, is only to drive them from scenes of strife and blood to the places best fitted to their nature. If man invades their solitude and envies them their deserts, he is guilty of injustice and abuses his power. Let him not complain if, in such a case, he suffer evil. The blame is with himself. The imputation of savage nature belongs to the aggressor, and not to him who uses the power which God hath given him for his defence and protection.

II. This leads me to consider, in the next

place, the *manner* in which our dominion over the inferior animals ought to be exercised.

A right to *rule*, is not a right to *tyrannize*; and a right to *service* extends only to such duties as are consistent with the powers of the servants, and with the place which is assigned to them. All power is of God, and can only be lawfully exercised when exercised according to his designs. Power, like every other talent and blessing, was given to be exercised in wisdom and goodness; and according to the principles and rules appointed by him who conferred it. Neither does it follow that, because we have a nobler nature, the world was made entirely for us. The Creator hath given to all his creatures the powers of life, activity, and enjoyment. He hath provided for their wants, and afforded to them the means of happiness. He hath, therefore, adapted external nature for their good as well as for ours; and hath given to them also their share of its blessings. And is it not obvious, that superiority of nature should lead to superiority of conduct? Power possessed by a good and generous man will be employed for the welfare of those who depend on him. That likeness to God in which we were originally created, should remind us that justice, and goodness, and mercy, are the chief distinctions after which we should aspire; and that our dominion was designed, like that of Him who designed it, to be exercised with wisdom, rectitude, and compassion. The consideration of our dominion, and the services by which those who are subjected to our power, in such numberless ways, minister to our comforts, only enforces on us more strongly the duty of providing for their comfort, and preserving them from injury. And is it not the very essence of benevolence to desire and to promote the happiness of every being within the sphere of our influence? Do not justice and rectitude require that we regard the rights of every living creature, whatever be their inferiority and helplessness—to make returns to them of care and kindness proportioned to the service they have rendered us; and at least to furnish them a competence of sustenance and comfort, when we have deprived them of the means of procuring it for themselves?

Consider, farther, how clearly God hath taught us his will, and our duty to the creatures whom he hath placed under our dominion.

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ion. For this purpose, let me ask you to turn your attention to the various inhabitants with which this globe is peopled, and you will find that all of them, of every kind, present to us the most wonderful displays of their Creator's concern for their well-being and happiness. The mighty seas and their tributary rivers are filled with active beings, of the most various orders, adapted with the most exquisite skill for their different elements, and all bounding with life and exuberant enjoyment. The air around us is also filled with winged inhabitants of surpassing beauty, who fly through the wide expanse, mount joyfully to the clouds, or sing among the branches of our varied woods. What scenes can the hand of man present, so lovely and so interesting! so fitted to delight and to improve the heart, to show us the Creator's will, and to interest us in the beings who have been so much the objects of his care! Here, too, is immense variety. Each have their different spheres, and each, by the nicest arrangements, are fitted to their own place. Each, too, have their peculiar instincts, and habits, and tastes, to which the various objects in external nature are admirably suited, and made to them the means of enjoyment. With what care and wisdom, for example, do the swallows choose a place for their nests, even in the midst of the habitations of men; and with what curious felicity do they build them! When winter comes, an internal monitor gives warning to seek a warmer clime: and, with a knowledge of which we can form no conception, they fly through the pathless heaven, and over the wide ocean, by the directest course, to the most distant countries: and there do they take up their residence till the summer returns. The bee that furnishes us with the honey comb, travels without fear over wide and distant fields—finds out her favourite flowers, and returns to her home, laden with the sweets she has collected, to add her portion to the common store. And with what wonderful contrivances do each follow the laws of their community, and unite to prepare their common dwelling, and to form a common stock for the provision of winter! Their hive, it has been found, is formed with mathematical exactness: nor could the most skilful architect contrive cells more proper for convenience and strength, than those which they form for holding their stores and rearing young. "Go also to the ant, thou

sluggard, consider her ways and be wise: which, having no guide, overseer or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest."

From the inhabitants of the air, let your minds for a moment dwell on the immense variety of the animal creation which tread the same surface of the earth with ourselves. "The earth," says the Psalmist, "is full of the riches of God." The hills and the valleys—the barren rocks as well as the fruitful fields—the wide-spreading plains and the deep and mighty forests—the sandy deserts and the heath-covered mountains, as well as the rich and luxuriant pastures—all have their own inhabitants allotted them, formed with bodies and with instincts suited to the places of their occupation. The camel is fitted for the parched wilderness. He carries his burden with ease, delights in the coarsest plants, and, with unabated strength, pursues his course through the dry and thirsty lands, wherein there is no water. In vain would the herbs grow on the summits of the mountains, were not animals formed to climb the craggy cliff, and endowed with a taste for its peculiar herbage. "The high hills," says the Psalmist, "are a refuge for the wild goats." They stand in safety and without fear on the brow of the precipice, and delight to browze on the plants of the rock. The external coverings of the various quadrupeds also mark the care of God for their comfort. "The hair of some," says an old writer, "is a commodious clothing. The furs and fleeces of others are not only a defensive against cold and wet, but a soft bed to repose in; and to many of them a comfortable covering to nurse and cherish their tender young." Observe also the fineness of their forms; and how distinguished at once for their beauty, strength, and activity. "Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? The glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength. He goeth on to meet the armed man. He mocketh, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword." Even those animals which, in this country, are most neglected and despised, bear the distinguished marks of their Creator's care. "Who," asks he in his word, "hath sent out the wild ass free? whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land her dwelling? He scorneth the multitudes of

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the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver. The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing."

But, perhaps, there is no circumstance connected with the inferior animals more fitted to interest a feeling mind, than those affections which God hath implanted in them towards their young, and the corresponding feelings of the young to follow the guidance and seek the protection of their parents. "How often would I have gathered thee," said our Saviour, "as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" "With what care do they nurse up their young! think no pains too great to be taken for them; no dangers too great to be ventured upon for their guard and security? How carefully will they lead them about in places of safety; carry them into places of retreat and security? How will they caress them with their affectionate notes; lull and quiet them with their tender parental voice; put food into their mouths; suckle them, cherish and keep them warm; teach them to pick, and eat, and gather food for themselves; and, in a word, perform the whole part of those deputed by the Sovereign Lord and Preserver of the world to help such young and shiftless creatures, till they come to that maturity as to be able to shift for themselves."

And are such the creatures whom men despise; whom they grudge the food which the Creator had designed for them; whom they mark out to be the victims of insult, wanton persecution, oppression, and savage cruelty! "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?" "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all. These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good."

The lessons taught us by these noble views of the goodness and care of God, are not only enforced on us by the whole spirit of divine Revelation, but by impressive examples and direct commands.

The law, which God gave by his servant Moses, is distinguished for its tender care of the destitute, the afflicted, and the helpless. It is in this spirit that it enjoins kindness and compassion to all the creatures placed under our power, by the striking

commands which it gives respecting the labouring ox, and the harmless birds. "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn;" a striking instance of minute attention to the feelings and comforts of those humble ministers of good. We are thus taught the general spirit we should cherish; we are specially taught that every creature which toils for our benefit, should receive a liberal participation in those blessings which we enjoy through their labours. In the same spirit of compassion, it is commanded, "If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way, in any tree, or on the ground, thou shalt not take the dam with the young;" thou shalt not add to her wretchedness, that of losing her own liberty, and witnessing the destruction or imprisonment of her offspring.

But there is no precept in the Scripture which more impressively teaches to men their duty to the inferior creatures, than that of the Sabbath. This blessed Institution, appointed to man from the beginning of his existence—universal in the object which it celebrates, and the design which it is destined to advance—equally suited, and equally necessary to men of every country and of every age—of which we find traces among every people, and which is justly denominated the universal festival—this blessed Institution extends its care to the inferior animals, as well as to men; and enjoins one day in seven to be to them a Sabbath of rest, as well as to us. "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou *shalt not do any work*, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy *cattle*, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates." O blessed day! blessed in the work which it commemorates; blessed in the affections which it awakens; blessed in the spirit which it breathes; blessed in the sacred duties to which it is devoted; blessed in the rest which it gives to the wearied and the heavy laden; blessed in the peace and happiness which it diffuses throughout universal nature.

With dove-like wings peace o'er the village broods;
The dizzying mill-wheel rests; the anvil's din
Hath ceased; all, all around is quietness.
Lies fearful on this day, the limping hare
Stops and looks back, and stops, and looks on man—
Her deadliest foe. The toil-worn horse, set free,
Unheeded of the pasture, roams at large—
Hall, holy day! of heaven the certain pledge,
And pleasing prelibation here below;
'Tis thine, the groans of nature to assuage,
And bind, with balmy hands, her wounds of woe.

And what, my brethren, let us ask ourselves, is the spirit of the gospel of Christ; what the nature of its precepts; the dispositions which it requires; the design which it is destined to accomplish? It was the compassion of God that sent the Saviour into the world. It was to save the helpless and the lost, that the Son of God made himself of no reputation; took on him the form of a servant, and humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. All that he taught, and did, and suffered, breathed mercy and compassion. By every mean, and on every occasion, he enforces the duties of equity and kindness on his disciples. He requires them to cherish universal love, and to delight in doing good. The fruits of his Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, and gentleness. It is the object of the dispensation of grace to restore men to the likeness of God, and to make them new creatures; to raise them to a heavenly

character; to become merciful as God is merciful. Changed in character, Christians become not only meet for the heavenly state, but the means of producing a blessed change on the condition and character of the inhabitants of the earth. And, as the inferior creation have suffered from the corruptions and vices of man, they are blessed in proportion to the extent and degree of his renovation.

Thus, all the principles which should distinguish us as men and as Christians unite to enforce on us kindness and compassion to the inferior creation. The general principles of justice and humanity—a regard to the example and will of God as our Creator—the principles of his Word—the character to which he calls us in the dispensation of his grace—the example, the spirit, the requirements, the designs of the Saviour—all unite to enforce on us the obligation of kindness and compassion to the inferior creation.

(To be concluded in our next.)

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To whom all Communications should be addressed.

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SATURDAY, 15TH MARCH, 1834.

09. | SERMON by the Rev. JOHN TOD BROWN, Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. PATRICK M'FARLANE, D.D., Greenock.

ON CRUELTY TO ANIMALS;

A Sermon preached by the Rev. STEVENSON M'GILL, D.D.—Concluded.

III. But obvious and important as are these principles, how little are they regarded! how slightly felt by multitudes professing to be Christians! Like other important truths and duties, we know them, we acknowledge them, but they make little impression on our hearts. Nay, such is the demoralizing effects of custom, familiarity with evil, and the frequent abuses of power, that practices of the most odious nature, which, if witnessed for the first time, would excite our terror, are daily beheld and committed with the most brutal insensibility.

When Bruce, the celebrated traveller, related the bloody feasts on living animals which he had witnessed in Abyssinia, he was assailed with abuse, and his accounts pronounced to be incredible. Yet the Scriptures themselves suppose the truth of such statements, by the prohibition which is given to Reah: "Flesh with the life thereof—that is, the blood thereof—shall ye not eat;" and not only the facts which had been rejected have been proved to be true by succeeding travellers, but facts still more repugnant to humanity. And what particularly concerns us, my brethren, it has been found, in the course of such inquiries, that practices of equal, if not greater, barbarity have been found amongst ourselves, in order to furnish imaginary delicacies to the pallid and vitiated appetites of the wealthy and luxurious.

Nay, are not many even of our *sports* of a barbarous and inhuman order? I mean

not to maintain any fanciful and Utopian system. I grant, that the beasts of the field, as well as domestic animals, were intended for the food of man. I grant, also, that the numbers which they produce fit them for this purpose; and that, without a portion of them was thus destined, they would bear an undue proportion on the earth. I grant, also, that instincts of a peculiar kind have been given to other animals, in order to maintain this proportion; and that it is lawful, within proper bounds, what nature affords, to obtain them for the food of man. But though numbers of them should be used for our food, and the means which nature has furnished for obtaining them be employed, does it follow, that it is lawful for us to inflict on them unnecessary pain? that it is consistent with humanity to prolong their sufferings for our amusement? or to multiply them only for the purpose of affording us sport in their destruction? Is it necessary that we should harass them with perpetual terror? or that multitudes of both sexes should assemble to see for their amusement the race of death, and to hail with shouts of joy and triumph their victories over the trembling and defenceless victim? or should not the consideration, that their life must be sacrificed for our advantage, make us only more anxious that their captivity or death should be effected in such a manner as might give the least pain to the sufferers, and guard ourselves from the danger of insensibility to the rights and feelings

of the helpless and unprotected? But, passing from such practices, let us direct our attention to those for which no excuse from necessity can be pleaded. What are cock-fights and bull-baitings, so common in many places, but amusements which are disgraceful to a civilized people, fitted to foster the most baleful passions, and to harden the heart against the calls of humanity? Yet, disgraceful and barbarous as they are, they are trivial compared to the numerous and unmanly outrages in all that is decent and honourable, religious and moral, which we are doomed daily to witness in the practices of ordinary life. Are not the most harmless animals, which cross our paths, immediately the object of persecutions, and made the victims of wanton folly? Are not even the innocent and helpless birds, which, in the beautiful language of Scripture, sing among the branches, stoned, wounded, and murdered, to exercise the ingenuity of our youth? But look especially to him, "the noblest of the train that wait on man;" that generous animal whom all admire, and all wish to possess, and on whose services depend so many of our comforts and enjoyments! How frequently do we see him, after age has unfitted him for our pleasures, sold without concern to some heartless master, and doomed at once to want and the most oppressive toils! How many do we see, once admired for their beauty, now haggard, and feeble, and worn out, staggering on our streets, the victims of neglect, hunger, and oppression! How many do we see on our highways wounded and bleeding, pushed on to a speed for which they are disabled! Above all, how often do we see them struggling in vain with burdens beyond their strength—the patient victims of the most brutal outrages—lacerated by the lashings of their cruel masters, and goaded on to renew the struggle, till they fall prostrate on our streets, in hopeless agony!

These, my brethren, are painful facts; painful as they respect not only the unfortunate sufferers, but the condition of our

country, or the state of character which numbers display. Be assured, that in proportion as such barbarities prevail, does our nation recede from the principles and spirit of Christianity, and do numbers become prepared for every act of cruelty, injustice, and lawless aggression. Let us, for our own sake, as well as for the interests of humanity, exert ourselves for their suppression. Let us not only abstain from every approach to their commission, but let us use the influence and means which we possess, in banishing them wholly, and for ever, from human life.

Let me entreat you who are parents, to keep this merciful design continually in view, while you are endeavouring to form the principles and character of your children. Mark with displeasure every act of neglect and cruelty; teach them to view the inferior animals as objects of the care of God; that He is interested in their happiness, and is displeased with any evil that is done to them. Acquaint them with their history, their habits, their natures, and their uses. Interest the feelings of the young in their favour; and form the characters of your children on *christian* principles; inspire them with *christian* affections; lead them to judge by *christian* rules; and accustom to works of *christian* charity.

Earth groans beneath the burden of a war
Waged with defenceless innocence.
But many a crime, deem'd innocent on earth,
Is register'd in heaven: and these, no doubt,
Have each their record, with a curse annex'd.
Man may dismiss compassion from his heart,
But God will never.
The sum is this: If man's convenience, health
Or safety interfere, his rights and claims
Are paramount, and must extinguish theirs.
Else they are all—the meanest things that are—
As free to live, and to enjoy that life,
As God was free to form them at the first,
Who, in his sov'reign wisdom, made them all.
Ye therefore who love mercy, teach your sons
To love it too. The spring-time of our years
Is soon dishonour'd and defiled in most
By budding ills, that ask a prudent hand
To check them. But, alas! none sooner shoots,
If unrestrain'd, into luxuriant growth
Than cruelty, most dev'lish of them all.
Mercy to him that shows it, is the rule
And righteous limitation of its act,
By which heaven moves in blessing guilty man;
And he that shows none, being ripe in years,
And conscious of the outrage he commits.

ON THE FREEDOM WHICH THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH
CONFERS

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE MIDDLE CHURCH, PAISLEY, ON THE AFTERNOON OF
SABBATH THE 23d OF FEBRUARY,

By the Rev. JOHN TOD BROWN.

"The truth shall make you free."—JOHN viii. 32.

WITH what astonishment did the Jews hear this declaration of our Lord! They, the disciples of divine teachers, the favoured people amongst whom God had chosen to dwell as a Father, whilst the whole world besides was abandoned to ignorance and idolatry; was it possible that Jesus Christ could mean to speak to them of freedom, as if he considered them servants, bondsmen, slaves? Inspired prophets had instructed them; was it then possible that they could be the dupes of error? God was the object of their worship, his law was their rule, his service their privilege, his favour their portion; and how could any degradation attach to their circumstances? They were the children of Abraham; what then could Jesus mean by permitting himself to talk of their being made free? They knew not that the breast may bear the badge of freedom, and yet the heart of the freeman may not beat beneath it. They knew not that the spirit of the slave may crouch and growl in abject thraldom, though liberty seem to announce herself in his step and to sparkle in his eye. They knew not that the conviction of their independence was the strongest possible proof of their bondage—that their not feeling their fetters, not starting when they were shaken, not rejoicing when it was proposed to strike them off, only showed how entire had been their subjugation. And, hence, instead of welcoming these words of our Lord, "the truth shall make you free," as the declaration of their deliverance, they turned upon him with equal ignorance and pride, setting aside his proposal as needless and derogatory, and denying the principle on which it was grounded. "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, then, ye shall be made free?"

And in like manner, my hearers, I fear it cannot be reckoned any breach of charity to believe, that amongst ourselves there are those whose experience is ready to express

itself in the answer of the Jews. In point of privilege we have been signally favoured by Providence. Here, if in any country on the face of the earth, worthy conceptions are entertained of God, his worship is devoutly celebrated, his day scrupulously hallowed. And if we turn from the public to the private proofs of religious knowledge and feeling, there is scarcely a beggar in the land who is not capable of reading his Bible, and possessed of a general acquaintance with its contents; scarcely a parent who is not conscious that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; scarcely a child who has not been taught that he ought to remember his Creator in the days of his youth. In this state of things, it were affectation to doubt the existence of a substantial superiority. But whilst it is our duty to thank God that he has so highly favoured us, it were an evidence of the utter want of penetration did we persuade ourselves that the semblance had never received that esteem which is due only to the substance—that pride on account of privilege had not been felt when the power of the faith was experimentally unknown, and that all the externals of christian discipleship had not been exhibited, when in reality the heart was grovelling under another and an unholy bondage. And as you can easily conceive an occasion on which the members of a community would consider it an affront, were it said to them in their political capacity, you believe yourselves to be free, but in reality you are not so, and would then be surprised by an enumeration of grievances which, with unconscious servility, they had been contented to suffer; so, my brethren, it is not to be doubted that, on hearing the words of the text, "the truth shall make you free," some of you will be disposed to exclaim, we were never in bondage, we are the subjects of the most religious realm in the world; how sayest thou, then, ye shall be made free?

If this supposition be correct, it is plain, my brethren, that it would be folly to attempt impressing on you the intimation of the text, before adverting to that state of bondage in which it is far from improbable that you may lie. It may, indeed, be a sacred duty to attempt the emancipation of the slave, though he scarcely feel galled by the fetters that enchain him. But it is nevertheless true, that if we seek not merely the cessation of his thraldom, but his participation of the blessings of liberty; if we would make him not merely a free but a happy, virtuous, and efficient member of society, we must teach him from what injustice and infamy he is to be rescued, and to what privileges he is to be restored. And so is it with those who are in the state of bondage supposed in the text. As the preliminary step to their emancipation, they must be convinced of their misery and guilt; they must learn that they are in a condition very different from that to which they are called by the Gospel. It must be impressed on them that they ought not to sit contented under the yoke of the oppressor who has enslaved them—that there is every possible motive to stimulate their efforts for their deliverance—that their captivity, if they be not rescued from it, will end in their eternal servitude, and that, if they do not now “awake and arise, they must be for ever fallen.” Let me, therefore, commence by directing your thoughts to that condition of slavery, on the assumption of which our Lord grounds his assertion that the truth shall make us free.

And first of all, it is deserving of remark, that wherever bondage exists there must have been some agent by whom that bondage has been imposed. In conformity with this principle, we accordingly find that the great enemy of God and man not only assailed the weakness of human nature in its most vulnerable point, not only strengthened his seduction by the employment of every attraction, spell and allurement which malice could devise and ingenuity suggest, but proved himself an overmatch for the simplicity of our first parents, and tempted them from their obedience, and nullified the terms of their allegiance. They fell; and think you, my brethren, that their fall was but their failure in a contest whose disasters some succeeding victory might repair? No; on that trial of strength was suspended the destiny of the species. It was not an ordinary contest where defeat infers nothing

more than the abandonment of the field to the conqueror; and where, by the subsequent success of the campaign, cowardice may replace the laurel on its brow, and the hurry of the retreat be converted into the proud and regular array of the triumphal procession. It was a conflict in which the parties represented millions of adherents. They were the champions of their respective causes; innocence on the one side, impiety, rebellion, on the other; truth and righteousness against falsehood and iniquity; the whole host of hell in the person of its prince confronting the whole human family in the person of its father: these were the combatants. The discomfiture of the intrigues of darkness, or the overthrow of mortal hope and happiness; the steadfastness of countless generations to their rightful sovereign, or their base desertion of his cause and service: these were the mighty alternatives hanging on the strife. Liberty and happiness, the watch-words on the one side, wretchedness and thraldom on the other.

And, accordingly, after the struggle had taken place, and our adversary prevailed, not only was our common progenitor degraded to the rank of servitude, but all his posterity became the property of the conqueror—being branded with his curse and born into his chains. I know that any such thraldom as that which I am asserting is liable to be ridiculed as the bugbear of superstition: and because, forsooth, the defenders of scriptural doctrine cannot conjure out of the human breast the evil spirit that lurks amidst its corruptions, and exhibit him in palpable reality to the eye of unbelief, they are accused of portraying a phantom which has no existence, save in their own visionary speculations. Now, my brethren, without opposing to such objections the mass of proof which the Bible contains on the subject, it seems to me, that those who urge them, instead of vindicating human nature from the imputation of wickedness and weakness, (for that is the achievement at which they aim,) strip it of something that might be advanced as an argument in extenuation of its guilt. For it is denied by none that every child of Adam is more or less chargeable with fearful depravity and egregious folly. And is it, think you, very consolatory, in the contemplation of this worthlessness, to maintain, that there is no fiend ever busy in the heart, blasting all its promise of good, aiding and abetting all its

tendency to evil? It surely were more to the credit of our nature to believe, that but for the power of the tempter it would act oftener in conformity with its better principles; and that bad though it be in itself, it yet is rendered a thousand times worse by the malice, and the art, and the machinations of Satan.

But, independently of this consideration, it is difficult for him who admits the truth of the Bible, to deny that the evidence it contains, in proof of the agency of the devil, is almost as insurmountable as the evidence it contains in proof of the corruption of man. How it comes to pass, that this malevolent being insinuates himself amidst the intricacies of our thoughts and feelings, we cannot indeed tell. But it is sufficient for us to know that he confronted our common father, when he stood arrayed in the rectitude of original holiness, and foiled and overthrew him; and that ever since, whether by the shades of ignorance, or the obstacles of unbelief, he has perpetuated his power over the mind—now arining it for a reckless defiance of its author; now bewitching it into a giddy unconcern about its eternal interests; now brooding like a dark cloud in the bewildered brain of the infidel; now gleaming like the momentary sunshine on the heart of the sensualist. And whether we acknowledge or deny the existence of this influence, that does not alter the fact, that it hath been exerting itself on us as its victims. If our consciousness does not convince us of its presence, it is because our faculties are unable to trace the operation of one spirit upon another; not because such an operation does not take place; not because the entanglements of our adversary are devoid of power, but because they are too impalpable to be detected by our self-examination. As well might it be affirmed, that it was not the poison which had prostrated the strength and engendered disease, because we could not specify the identical spring of vitality whose economy it had deranged; or that the Father of our spirits did not control their motives, because we could not mark the precise moment of his interference. In both cases the cause is not the less certain, that we cannot explain the mode in which it acts. We see the effect: from it we reason to the cause. We trace the work of an agent throughout the complicated corruption of our nature, and hence we infer the presence and activity of the agent himself. We know the soul to be in

a state of spiritual bondage; to move with unwillingness and disrelish in every thing that is good; to fly with infatuated speed towards sin, death and hell; and we therefore conclude, that the enslaver waves over it the scourge of his despotism, and that it is no less surely branded with his mark, than it is the prey of his machinations.

Now, my brethren, such being the agency of the being by whom we were originally enthralled, and under whose dominion we are born into the world, it ought to be matter of sincere rejoicing to us that he is not left in undisputed possession of our hearts. For you cannot require to be reminded, that if he who is against us is mighty, He who is for us is mightier still. Our foe is profound in his plans, inexhaustible in his resources, unwearied in his activity, and unrelenting in his enmity. But opposed to him is a friend every way qualified to afford us strength for the conflict—wisdom when we are perplexed, comfort when we are baffled; yea, to enable us finally to throw off the yoke and bruise Satan under our feet. “I am the truth,” said the gracious Redeemer of himself. “For this purpose,” saith St. John, “was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” And were not these works destroyed when the tempter found that all his resources were employed in vain against the Saviour? that neither the cravings of want, nor the desire of demonstrating his divinity, nor the view and offer of all earthly possessions, could prevail to make him forget the devotion due from him to God? Should we not be cheered by such an exhibition of firmness in the prospect of our difficult encounter and perilous enterprise? Does not the thought of Christ’s strength prove a most seasonable restorative amidst our weakness, inefficiency and faintness? Why should we despair of deliverance, when we have such a Captain of our salvation pointing out to us the path of emancipation? He will be our Lord; his right over us he will not suffer to be usurped by another; why then should we hang our head as if our rescue were impossible? It is He who hath convicted the arch fiend of treachery and falsehood, who hath walked triumphant through his temptations, who hath rent asunder the chains of the captive, and bid him go forth “redeemed, regenerated, and disenthralled,” who hath taken away the sting of sin and neutralized the victory of the grave; it is the Truth himself, the type, the personifica-

tion, the development, the pattern of that noblest attribute of the Godhead, who, with his own lips, declares that he will make us free ; have we hearts, and can we continue unMOVED under such an intimation ? are we in bondage, and shall we not spring up and shake off the fetters that enthrall us ?

But, further, wherever a case of slavery exists, there not only must have been an enslaver, there must also have been the act of reducing into servitude, and the sentence by which that servitude is perpetuated. To make this plain to you, let me ask, In what consists the difference between a slave and a freeman ? In this, the one is the property —is at the disposal of the other. He has bought or he has conquered him. A sentence of thraldom has been pronounced on him ; and the sufferings and degradation of his life are to be considered as the fulfilment of this sentence. And is there nothing analogous to this in the lot of fallen humanity ? Was there no struggle in consequence of which its freedom has been forfeited ? Are there not ten thousand temptations by whose allurements its liberty is daily purchased ? Has no decree of degradation gone forth against it ? Is it not the prey of sorrow, and exposed to death, and menaced by a judgment which shall doom it to the further penalty of everlasting wretchedness ? Yes, my brethren, startling though the intelligence may be, it is not the less true, that even at our birth the spells of our spiritual foe are thrown around us—that the mark of his supremacy is stamped upon us ; and, that in spite of our elasticity of soul—in spite of our feeling of freedom as we range at will through the amplitude of earth's goodly inheritance and claim kindred with the glories of the sky, our destiny is downward : we carry about with us the sentence of condemnation impressed—engraved on the very core and centre of our heart. You do not feel that you are branded with a curse which consigns you to the displeasure of your Maker, when his righteous judgments shall be executed ; every thing around you seems to announce a very different destination : nature beams on you with universal loveliness —her horrors are but the spectacles of her sublimity ; pain rarely disturbs your ease, and when it does, it only heightens the enjoyment of the relief that follows it ; nothing argues that you are on the path of perdition, on the contrary, each step is planted in peace and prosperity : wherefore, then,

talk of destruction, when each work of creation and providence is fraught with happiness and safety ! You reason thus ; and thus might the slave reason, whose fathers, for countless generations, had borne the yoke of the oppressor. He might reason, “ surely this slavery of which so much is said can be no real grievance ! I have my health, my food, my clothes ; I enjoy the light of day and the air of heaven ; what more do I require ? I am contented with my state ; why should I wish to alter it ? ” What inference would you draw from such a declaration ? Not surely that he was free ! No ; on the contrary, you would consider his simple ignorance as the strongest possible evidence of the depth of his degradation, the hopelessness of his thraldom ! And so, because you do not feel that, in your natural state, you are lying under the wrath of God due to you for sin, that, does not prove your freedom, that does not do away your fetters. It only demonstrates that you are bound hand and foot in insensibility, and that your destruction is certain, because you are determined rashly to rush on it.

If it be true, then, that we are liable to the penalties of the divine law, and, unless we obtain forgiveness, shall die for ever in our sins, with what feelings of joy ought we to hail the intimation of the text, that “ the truth shall make us free ! ” And, to come to particulars, what truth is it that makes us free from the guilt of sin, and translates us into the glorious liberty of the children of God ? It is the truth that, in the death of Jesus Christ the punishment we should have endured was undergone, and, by his faultless obedience, such merit and virtue were purchased, as, on being imputed to us, render us not only innocent, but acceptable, in the sight of heaven, and convert us, from being mere debtors to the mercy, into creditors on the justice of our Judge. Or, to employ the figure of the text, on coming into the world, we are sealed with the curse of the broken law, and delivered over to our spiritual foe, that he may execute the sentence to which our iniquities have exposed us. The moment when we betake ourselves to the plea of Christ's righteousness, we pass from the domain of death into a land whose inhabitants are free from the chains of bondage, free in the favour of God, and free of the Jerusalem above. It was thus that, on crossing the boundaries of Egypt, the Israelites left behind them the

thraldom of Pharaoh ; thus, that the first step they took from the territory of their oppressor, was also the first step that carried them towards the land of promise ; thus, that, ceasing to be the slaves of their tyrant, they became the servants of Jehovah ; thus, that, on fleeing to Christ, we escape from the power of Satan, and pass from the dominion of death to the participation and the prospect of everlasting life.

Many are the blessings connected with the justification of the sinner. The alarms of conscience cease ; dismay is displaced by hope ; he is not only free, in fact, from the execution of his sentence, but the feeling of his freedom fills him with all joy and peace in believing. More especially, let me not forget to remind you, that there is a fear which must occasionally have appalled even the least thoughtful of our race, and which keeps many in a state of perpetual bondage—I mean the fear of death. Ah ! my brethren, here is an instance in which you may see plainly brought before you the superiority of christian to worldly happiness. You are perhaps a giddy trifler, flitting from object to object, dwelling little on any solid theme of contemplation, and, least of all, on your prospects as a creature destined for eternity. Now, let me assure you, that, though your frivolities may at present fascinate your faculties, they will stand you in poor stead, when the curtains of disease close around your couch, and you discover, at the ear approach of death, that you are in bondage to the dread of it. Or, is your character of a more decided tone, and do your passions transport you to their idols with an impetuosity which gives you no leisure to listen to the still small voice of conscience, warning you of your danger ? And are you never scared by death crossing your path, like a phantom, scarce giving you sufficient time to close your eyes against the view of a shape so horrible ? It will not be always thus. Your enemy will not always thus vanish at your bidding. No ; his hour is on the wing, when you will have to stare on him with steadfast gaze ; and the shuddering with which even the glimpse of his shadow can shake you now, will be increased a thousand fold, by his grasping you as his prey ? Or, are you engrossed with the affairs of life, constantly occupied either in devising or executing your projects ? You are a shrewd man of business ; your calculations rarely deceive you ; your plans rarely fail ; and yet does it never strike you that

there is a fundamental error running through all your schemes ? and does the finger of death, like the finger at the feast of Belshazzar, never draw across your reckonings the lines of its obliteration—the proofs of your mortality, your folly, and your danger ? Ah ! yes, my brethren, you cannot deny that I am right in my conjectures. Death at times whispers in your ear, that your mortal moment is at hand ; and, in the view of that tremendous crisis in your history, when sense and time shall be no more, and your soul shall tremble in naked helplessness before the eternal tribunal, you cannot but feel that you are slaves—that death is your oppressor, and destruction will be your doom.

How different, in the same circumstances, the experience of “ the free man whom the truth has made free ! ” When the thought of dissolution occurs to him, he remembers that Redeemer who has said, “ I am the resurrection and the life.” He anticipates the agonies of his final conflict with a calm composure. He is but to explore a mournful mystery, which his blessed Master has disarmed of its power to overwhelm him. It is the last barrier between earth and heaven which he must scale ; the last drop of bitterness in the cup of sorrow which he must drink. And though it may cause him some apprehension, he feels more of hope than of fear when he thinks of it, and he prays that he may be enabled to sustain his infirmities with patience, and calmly to resign his soul to “ its rest—the bosom of his God.”

Thus have we seen, my brethren, two instances illustrative of the proposition of the text ; and I now come, in the third place, to another sense in which it may be said that the truth makes us free. Hitherto I have been bringing before you, on the one hand, the enslaver ; on the other, the deliverer : in the one case, your state as spiritual slaves ; in the other, your state as spiritual freemen ; and it remains for me to contrast your character in the condition of bondage, with your character in the condition of emancipation. Nothing is more common than to hear of a person’s being the slave of error, the slave of prejudice, the slave of an evil habit. Of him, then, whose nature has not been renewed by the grace of the Gospel, it cannot be incorrect to affirm that he is the slave of sin. Now, in this sense, the whole of human wickedness may be classed under two divisions, namely, error of opinion, and depravity of inclination. And, first,

of error of opinion. I need not inform you that every human being acts according to his opinions—that is to say, he does so generally; for even the most decided men are at times inconsistent with themselves. And what is the character of the individual who has come to the deliberate conclusion that there is no truth whatever in the religion of the Bible. Such a one is, indeed, delivered from what he considers the influence of priesthood and the phantoms of superstition. He escapes from the dread of a future retribution. There is no God to mark his wickedness; no justice to pursue him with punishment; death is but the natural and necessary passage through which he may reach a happier existence; or, at the worst, it is but a blank oblivion which shall wrap him in the unconsciousness of his original nothingness. This is called free-thinking; and so, according to one meaning of the terms, it is. But does it therefore follow that true freedom is here enjoyed? God is denied; but is there no belief in fate, or chance, or fortune, that rises up in room of him? The law of the Gospel is thrown aside; but do not custom and fashion exercise a tyranny infinitely more galling? Hell and sin are derided as the fiction of theology; but does conscience never insist on the certainty of a day of reckoning? The infidel is free! Yes; but it is from the guidance of reason—from the restraint of principle—from every thing that ought to be dear to the human heart—from every thing that can exalt our degraded nature; and, whilst he rushes from one excess of riot into another, or congratulates himself because he does not bend the knee to that Being before whom his fellow-creatures feel it to be their duty to fall, he is, in reality, the veriest slave that was ever fettered, enthralled by a host of sophistical prejudices, and tormented by the demands of domineering passions.

But it is needless to dwell on the description of error so gross as this, especially since it is to be presumed that there are none of you, my brethren, who would choose to be ranked amongst the abettors of scepticism. A far more common case is that of those who, whilst they receive revelation, yet adopt such partial views of it, as to prevent it from setting them free. Before I can judge of any proposition, it must be fairly laid before me. I must understand its terms, and weigh its evidence, and devote to the investigation of it the requisite

attention and time. I cannot mourn over an evil of which I am ignorant. I cannot be grateful for a benefit which I do not believe has been bestowed on me. In one word, the correctness of my conceptions, on any subject, will be in proportion to the consideration I give it; and in proportion to the correctness of my conceptions will be the effect produced upon my heart.

Apply this principle to the present object of inquiry, and it follows, that precisely in the degree in which we have busied ourselves about divine truth will our views of it be clear; and in the degree in which our views of it are clear will be its influence on our character. If we systematically reject any of its doctrines, in so far we are in error; if we give to others of them only a superficial and hurried assent, in so far also we are in error—no matter whether our errors be positive or negative, whether we deny the truth, or whether our notions of it be defective—in both cases a perverse influence is exercised over us; we are the dupes of ignorance, or we are the slaves of falsehood.

In such circumstances, the promise of the text assures us of deliverance. The truth shall make us free, but not by any process of miracle or mystery. It will not do merely to place ourselves in the attitude of its disciples, waiting, like the man at the pool of Bethesda, till some supernatural agent shall make his appearance. We must bestir ourselves in good earnest, and become mighty in the Scriptures, like Apollos, and ask, with a different spirit from that of Pilate, “What is truth?” and beg of God, like Solomon, an understanding heart, in preference to all earthly blessings, and seat ourselves at the feet of Jesus, as did Mary; and then may we expect that our ignorance will vanish like that of the Eunuch, and our doubts be satisfied like those of Thomas, and we shall exclaim, “My Lord and my God.”

But, again, the mind of the natural man is in a state of bondage, inasmuch as it is the slave of depraved inclination. “Whosoever,” saith our Lord in the context, “committeth sin, is the servant of sin.” And this is true, not only of flagrant breaches of the divine law, but of all those propensities of unrenewed nature which keep the heart under their dominion. Thus, my brethren, it is not needful that you should be profiteers, or thieves, or liars, or Sabbath-breakers, in order to your being ranked with the

bondsmen of Satan. Are you living without God in the world—not feeling your necessity of Christ as your Saviour—not praying for the many blessings you require—not studying the Word of God—not striving after heaven in the exercise of faith, penitence, and hope; then ungodliness is the habit of your heart: you are enchain'd by the torpor of indifference; you are led captive by the enemy of your souls. You may be highly respectable members of society, and pride may be the principle of your character, by which you are enslaved; or, you may be a person of lofty aspirations, and ambition may be the idol to which you bow; or, you are heaping up wealth, and Mammon is the master whom you serve; or, you have been gifted with warm feelings, and your friends are the agents of your thrall-dom—your own children are the chains that hold you in subjection. Or, as a more minute illustration of the bondage of sin, suppose the case of a person addicted to the vice of intoxication, who yet is not so entirely besotted as to be insensible to his situation. Such a one feels within him a strong desire. This desire is opposed by a conviction almost equally strong. At one time conscience prevails, and sobriety becomes the habit of a day, perhaps of a week, or even of a month. Again the fit returns; again the appetite craves, till its demands can no longer be resisted; again the reason reels, and again remorseful repinings prey upon the heart, and the tempest of passion is succeeded by the tears of repentance. The man is a slave; he writhes under his chain; he tries to shake it off, sinking and struggling, struggling and sinking by turns, and his life is one continued agony of contest and defeat.

And how is it that, in such a case, and, indeed, in every case of depraved inclination, the truth makes us free? By convincing us of the evil, the misery, and the danger of sin. Of its evil; because it is expressly contrary to the will of our Creator; because, independently of the punishment with which he has determined to visit it, conscience teaches us that there is something inherently base and unworthy in the commission of it, because it indicates the blackest ingratitude, and because, ere its penal consequences could cease to threaten us, it was necessary that the Son of God should suffer and die in our stead. Of its misery; for whatever momentary joy may gleam from its temptations, they never fail

to be accompanied by a secret misgiving, and sooner or later succeeded by the recollections of remorse: and of its danger; since all the anguish and disappointment it occasions, in the present life, are but a foretaste of that deeper distress which shall prey upon the sinner, when the screen of sense has been withdrawn, and the upbraiding of conscience can no longer be silenced by the turbulence of passion, or the merriment of pleasure. The evil, misery and danger of sin being once discovered, the worth of holiness begins to be appreciated, and the various objects which had held the heart in thrall-dom lose their power to enslave it. As Dagon could not stand in the presence of the ark of the Lord, so are they displaced by the love of God, who thenceforth receives the homage and obedience of all the faculties and feelings. Not that it is meant that the sacredness of the saintly character is never profaned, or its happiness never interrupted! Alas, go where we will, the world is still a valley of tears, and life still chequered by corruption! But there is a wide difference between the habitual impiety of the sinner, and the occasional forgetfulness of the saint; between the gross darkness of a soul, which never feels the Divine presence, and the passing clouds by which, from time to time, the light of God's countenance is obscured. Yes, my brethren, discouraging though it must be to look in vain for those characteristics that ought to distinguish the Church from the world, the great Searcher of hearts is at no loss to discover them! He sees, though all invisible to mortal eye, the fiend of darkness settling over the soul, and quenching every ray of purity, or transforming himself into an angel of light, and deceiving the conscience into the belief that it is irreproachable, when, in reality, it is not influenced by one principle of piety. He knows whether the sentence of condemnation has been remitted to each individual, or whether he be only trifling away his term of respite, and hastening towards his ruin, unredeemed, unregenerated. He marks the hidden guilt of sin, traces the transgressor through all the doublings and windings by which he contrives to elude the observation of man; and though he may wrap himself in the mantle of midnight, "the darkness hideth not from God, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike unto him." In a word, our real condition, our freedom through the truth, or our bondage to sin

and error, are so thoroughly known unto God, that, did he see fit to break silence, he is, at this moment, prepared to pronounce our eternal sentence. And, oh! my brethren, what an appalling thought is this! You are here all professing to be the children of God. Have you any good grounds for believing that you are so? Does the word of the truth of the Gospel, to which you are listening, come home to each heart with the demonstration of the Holy Ghost? or are there not some who neglect, some who doubt, some who disbelieve, some who despise it? And when you rise to offer up your prayers, will there be none whose coldness, and wandering, and weariness, will plainly show what manner of spirit they are of? And after retiring from the sanctuary, is it not too probable that secular employment, or unhallowed trifling on this sacred day, or habitual carelessness and presumptuous sin to-morrow, and all the week through, will prove to those around you, and would prove it to yourselves if you were not dead to conviction—that the truth | folly that neglects to secure it!

has not made you free—that Satan reigns in your souls—that condemnation hangs over your heads—that you are the slaves of sinfulness.

What a contrast between your state and that of the redeemed saint! You are doing the will of the impious apostate who has enslaved you; he of the heavenly Ruler who has ransomed him. You are ever moving under the cloud of the divine wrath, which shall ere long burst on your devoted head; he is overhung by a crown of glory, which is daily descending more near him. He, like a younger brother of the angels, is training for immortal honour; you are preparing for the fellowship of rebellious, wretched outcasts. You are rivetting your chains; he has shaken them off: and to whatever spot of the universe he be transported, he can point to the cross of Christ, and exclaim, *I am free*; and all the powers of hell united shall not dare to infringe his liberty. How poor every other privilege in comparison of this! how infatuated the

THE HISTORY OF KING JOSIAH;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THE EVENING OF 2D FEBRUARY, 1834, IN THE MID-PARISH CHURCH, GREENOCK, BEING THE ANNUAL SERMON IN BEHALF OF THE GREENOCK SABBATH SCHOOLS,

By the Rev. PATRICK M'FARLANE, D.D.,

Minister of the West Church, Greenock.

“ Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty years. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined neither to the right hand nor to the left. For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images.”—2 CHRON. xxxiv. 1—3.

Now, my friends, any of you that have Old Testaments, keep them open at the place, and be ready to look at them when I desire you to do so in the course of this discourse. You all know what a king is. A king is the chief ruler of a country. He is the man that gives out his commands, which the people are required to obey, and he has his magistrates, and his judges, and his priests, and his armies, under him. This Josiah of whom I have been reading, in the two verses I have now been reading in your hearing, was a king. His father's name was Amon, and he also was a king of Judea.

He was a very wicked man, and he died when Josiah was a little boy. When Amon died, Josiah succeeded to his father as the king of Judea; so that he became a king when he was eight years old—younger probably than most of you are, whom I am now addressing. I dare say there are some of the young people to whom I am now speaking, who may say, O what a happy man was this Josiah! he was a king, and he became a king when he was a little boy. I have to tell you, what may astonish some of you, but it is nothing more than a certain and undoubted truth, that it is a very

bad thing for any body to be a king ; and it is a still worse thing for any body to be a king when he is a little child—when he is, as Josiah was, eight years old. If you are disposed to ask me what I mean by this, I say at once that it is not for any man's happiness to be a king ; that he has so many temptations, so many troubles, so many things to vex and harass him, that he is not half so happy as one of you will be, if you seek after God, and if you walk in the way of his holy commandments. And if it be the lot of a man to be a king when he is a very young child, which was the case with this Josiah, it is just so much the worse ; for every body round about him will be disposed to flatter him, and then he will get very proud and vain of being a king, and scarcely any body will have the courage to refuse him what he wants ; and then he will be so much accustomed to self-indulgence that, when he is crossed, he will not be able to bear it ; and will have so much self-indulgence when a little boy, that it is just the most wonderful thing if a king turns out to be a good man, or a happy man ; and, therefore, I repeat it again, that, instead of thinking it to be a good thing, it is a very bad thing to be a king—I mean to say it is very bad for himself. Somebody must be king ; and we must be thankful when one, who is a king, discharges his duty rightly ; but it is far better to be a poor and a good man, than a king and a wicked man. It might have been expected that Josiah would have turned out very ill, and that, having become king at the time he was only eight years of age, he would have been uncommonly wicked ; but it was not so. It pleased God, in his mercy, to make this Josiah, who was a king so young and had so many temptations against him, one of the best men that ever lived—one of the best kings that ever Judea had, and, perhaps, one of the best kings that ever reigned in any age, or in any country. We are told in the third verse of the chapter, that “in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father.” Now, remember that I told you his father died when Josiah was eight years old. He became king when he was eight years old ; and in the eighth year of his reign—that is, when he was sixteen years old, he began to seek after the God of his father. Now, I do not know a worse time of life than sixteen. It is just the time when boys and girls are vain and conceited, and will listen to nobody ; and,

therefore, it is the more wonderful that this Josiah, this young king, began to seek God at that time of life ; and yet so it is, when he was at sixteen, between the condition of a man and of a boy, he began to seek the Lord God of David and his father. Observe that, when at sixteen, he was beginning to reign himself. A boy of eight could not reign ; but when he was come to about sixteen, it would just be about the time when he began to reign for himself, and the time when pride would begin to reign in his heart ; but God can make the proudest heart lowly, and can make a king at sixteen a good man. This is more than the power of man could do. It was the power of the Spirit of God that made Josiah to begin at sixteen to seek the Lord God of his father. Now, look to this 3d verse : we are told, “While he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father.” I have known in my experience, as a minister, of some young persons at sixteen feeling deep impressions of religion, becoming very serious apparently, and their parents and teachers had great hopes that they would turn out all they desired ; but it was as the morning cloud and the early dew—they had their impressions then, but as they grew up they passed away ; and, instead of being good men, they turned out very thoughtless and wicked. Now, the sacred writer tells us here, that, when at sixteen, “he began to seek after the God of his father”—he had not begun to seek him before ; and when he began at sixteen, there is this pleasing thing of Josiah, he continued to seek him. “In the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images.” Now, what I wish you to learn from this, is this, if you be really good, you will continue good ; if you be converted to God, you will continue to follow after God—you will not be good merely when at Sabbath Schools, when perhaps twelve or fourteen, it may be sixteen ; but when twenty you will be good, still better than when sixteen ; because, if any person is really a good young man, or a good old man, he will always be growing better. And so it was with Josiah ; he began to seek God when sixteen, and he continued to seek and serve God, and at twenty he showed his zeal for goodness, by purging, that is purifying, Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, where they worshipped their idols, and the carved images,

and the molten images. Then, again, we are told in another part of the chapter before us, in the 8th verse, that in the eighteenth year of his reign—that is, when twenty-six years of age, he still continued a good man. Here are ten years more of his life—he began to be good, and he continued good. At twenty-six, “he sent Shaphan, the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah, the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the Lord his God.” Now, I wont detain you, by reading all that is here stated; but what I mean to say is this, that, in the eighteenth year of his reign, or, when twenty-six years old, after having put away the idols, he began to set the temple in order, to restore it to its purity and glory. Many of you know what the temple was; it was the place that God commanded to be built as a habitation for him; the place where he appeared by the visible symbols of his presence, and where worship and sacrifice were continually offered up to him by his people.

Now, I have to mention another pretty little incident in the history of Josiah: that when they were engaged in purifying the temple, they found the Book of the Law. This was a book laid up in the ark, or chest, before the Lord, containing the five books of Moses, and probably the other books existing at that time. There were many other copies of the law besides this; but when they were purifying the temple they found it and brought it to Josiah, and read it before the king at that time there. And Josiah was deeply affected with it, and so deeply, that he actually called all the people together; and, to make the deepest impression on their minds, he himself read out of this book of the law what God would do to

people, if they continued a wicked and

backsliding people. Now think of this, my young friends. I dare say some of you would be ashamed to be found reading your Bible. I know that there are some older, grown men and women, in this very town, that would be so. Now, here is this Josiah, so far from being ashamed of reading his Bible, that he goes and gathers the people together; and, though a king—the first man in the country—the greatest man in Judea, yet Josiah is found reading the Bible to the people, and expressing his earnest desire that they should listen with reverence to the threatenings of God therein contained, and turn unto him with their whole heart. Then we read after this of Josiah keeping a passover, such as had not been kept for generations, or not at all before. Now, such was the life of Josiah. When he was sixteen, he began to seek the Lord God of his father, and he continued to do so, and to serve him, till the day of his death; and the consequence of all this was, that, when Josiah died, there was never a wise king so much lamented. The prophet Jeremiah lamented him, and all the singing men and the singing women; there was, indeed, the greatest possible lamentation and sorrow, on account of this good king Josiah. Now, I have given you the history of Josiah; and the next thing I have to point out to you, is the use you are to make of it. I dare say a great number of you come to your Sabbath evening schools, and say your questions, and read your bibles, and answer questions, without thinking why you do it. That is not right; knowledge is good, but only good if you make use of it and apply it; and, therefore, I want you to make use of it just now.

(To be concluded in our next.)

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SATURDAY, 22D MARCH, 1834.

104.

SERMON by the Rev. ANDREW GRANT, D.D., Edinburgh.
SERMON by the very Rev. G. H. BAIRD, D.D., Edinburgh.

Price 2d.

THE HISTORY OF KING JOSIAH;

A Sermon preached by the Rev. PATRICK M'FARLANE, D.D.—Concluded.

Now, the first observation I have to make on the history of Josiah is this, that he sought the Lord when he was young—(keep this in your recollection)—he sought the Lord when he was sixteen. O, says some one of you, perhaps, But I am not sixteen! To any of you who are saying this, I say, Do not wait till you are sixteen. Who told you you were to live till you were sixteen? Many a child has died before sixteen. Who told you that you will live till to-morrow? Do not wait, then, till you are sixteen; seek the Lord now. But if any of you are sixteen, as I doubt not, then do not wait a single moment; for it is said of Josiah, that when sixteen, he *began* to seek after the Lord God of his fathers. Now, my young friends, I just ask you, Why is Josiah commended for this? Why is this mentioned to the praise of Josiah? or rather, Why is it mentioned to the praise and the glory of God's grace? It is in order that you may seek God, and seek God while you are young. If Josiah had not sought him then, most probably he would never have sought him at all. As he grew up, he would have become every day more weak, and all the temptations to which a king is exposed, would have beset him on every side; and Josiah, unless the grace of God had prevented it, would most probably, in these circumstances, have forgotten God altogether, and would have become as wicked a king as his father Amon before him. And then think how much happiness Josiah gained, by seeking him when sixteen! If he had waited a year longer, he would just have wanted so much happiness in the favour and service of God; if he had waited a year longer, he would just have had his conscience branded with so many more sins committed in his unconverted state; if he had waited a year longer, he would have found it still more difficult to get the better of his wickedness, and to turn to the Lord. How much sin is avoided by commencing at sixteen! O, look at the streets, and hear some boys on

the Sabbath-day how they curse and swear, as if it had become a constant habit with them; and if they had begun to seek the Lord before they were sixteen, how much guilt would they have avoided that would not have rested on their consciences! Do not delay one hour, no, not one moment, to seek the Lord; for, if you seek him not now, you may not have heart or inclination to seek him hereafter.

Now, the second observation I have to make is, that Josiah sought God amidst many disadvantages. When a sinner, a young or an old sinner, is converted, there must be some means of his conversion. And there can be no doubt that there were some means of Josiah's conversion; for Josiah, though he became good and sought the Lord at that time of life, was born a sinner just like you and me, and had the same wicked heart, the same wicked inclinations, the same unwillingness to seek God, and there must have been some means used before Josiah was made to seek the Lord when so young. I do not know what these means were, but very likely he was made to seek the Lord in consequence of the instructions of a pious mother. You will find his mother's name was Jezidah; and the reason, in all probability, why she was mentioned is this, that she was a good woman, whose name deserved to be recorded in the Word of God. And you observe it was a custom in Judea, when the kings of Judea were very young, like Josiah, for their mothers to be Regents—that is, persons that reigned in place of their young children. She was Regent in place of Josiah, till he was able to act as king for himself; and it is more than probable that she was a pious woman, and taught her son Josiah to fear the Lord in his youth. She would teach him the necessity of forsaking sin, and following after God and true holiness. It appears that the instruction of Josiah did not take effect till he was sixteen. And why? Not because his heart was less prepared naturally, but because God did not send his blessing along

with the instructions of the mother; which should teach you that when you are seeking God, you must seek for the blessing of God upon the means. He had many temptations before that, and many afterwards; and at the time he was sixteen, he had peculiarly strong temptations to prevent him seeking the Lord, and yet he sought the Lord amid all these disadvantages. Now you may have many disadvantages which I cannot mention here, and no doubt your circumstances are different. I hope many of you have pious parents; but it would be a very extraordinary thing, if, among so many hundred children, there were not some that had parents that gave them no encouragement to seek the Lord—parents that are themselves wicked people. I do not want you ever to cease respecting and loving your parents; you must respect your parents although you may regret deeply that your eyes are open to their vices. Their example is one of the disadvantages. And children, if they have not pious parents, have bad children along with them—perhaps a wicked brother or sister, which are strong temptations to prevent them from seeking the Lord. Now, Josiah sought the Lord amid disadvantages far more powerful than yours; and, therefore, however your disadvantages may be able to tempt you to go wrong, do you seek the Lord. If you have not a pious parent, you have Sabbath school teachers—those fine young men, those fine young women who come out of their houses on a Sabbath evening to teach you in the ways of righteousness. There, they are the guides; listen to them, my young friends, and whatever your disadvantages, think for a moment of the instructions you are receiving from them, and do not listen to the temptations you may be beset with by your wicked and ungodly companions.

Now, I repeat what I have said upon this history. First, I have said that Josiah sought the Lord when he was young, and next that he sought the Lord among many disadvantages. The third observation is, that true religion consists in seeking the Lord and in serving the Lord. There are a great many mistakes on this subject among young people. If I were to say, such a boy is a good boy, what would be the answer you would give, if I were to ask you what is a good boy? Oh! he is a good boy, for he does what he is bid—he learns his lessons well. Now all this may be, and yet this boy may be without religion. He is not a good boy in the Bible sense of the expression. So in the same manner it is a very common mistake to say, with respect

to grown up men, oh! that man is a very good man—I never hear of him getting drunk; I never hear of him getting into any riot; he is an honest man, and does not cheat his neighbour; he is an upright man, he is faithful to his engagement with his master—that man is a good man. Now all this may be without religion. Why? Because true religion consists in seeking the Lord and in serving him, and there is no goodness without this. Then you will ask me, What is meant by seeking God? If I were to put this question to a boy, he would probably immediately answer, Praying to God; and so far would he be right. But seeking God implies a great deal more than praying to him; and I want you all to listen while I endeavour to explain to you what is meant by seeking God. When we seek any person, or seek any thing, it is because we put a value on that person or that thing. For example—if a man be seeking money, and all worldly persons are seeking after money from day to day, it is because he thinks money a good thing. If a man be seeking to become acquainted with another, and of being introduced to him, it is because he thinks he will be the better for being introduced to him. Now, when we are seeking God and led by the Spirit of God to seek him, we seek him because we believe we will find happiness in him. We seek the favour of a rich man, because we think the rich man will be of some benefit to us; we seek the favour of God, because we are convinced that his favour is life, and his love better than life. We seek the light of God's countenance, because we would much rather be looked down on with a smile of complacency from God, than have the smiles of the whole world resting upon us; we seek the favour of God, because we wish at last to obtain the kingdom of heaven.

Now, then, I come back to Josiah. The Bible says, that when he was yet young he began to seek the Lord God of David, his father. He began to seek him; he knew that in him, and in him only, could he find happiness and peace; he began to seek him because he saw the vanity of the world, and of kings, and of all earthly things—because he saw it was not enough for him to be the king of Judea, but also the servant of God, to have the enjoyment of his favour, and the hope of his heavenly kingdom at the last. And yet there are persons who are never disposed to seek after God. I ask, is not this a very extraordinary thing? Just think for yourselves, Is not this extraordinary? Why, if God be such a good

and a gracious being, and his favour of so much importance to us all, one would think it would be the first thing we would seek; and yet Josiah did not seek him till sixteen, although probably enjoying good instructions before. Many do not seek him till twenty, thirty, forty years of age; many do not seek after him at all, and sink into their graves without ever having sought after him. I beseech you recollect that a great part of true religion consists in seeking God—in seeking after him in prayer, in reading the Bible, and from day to day, that we may know about him, and the things that belong to our peace; in seeking after him in all the varied and appointed ordinances that are given us for our instruction and our progress in righteousness. A great part of religion, then, consists in seeking God. How do I prove this? I prove it from the passage before us, and from the whole history of Josiah. But I have another thing to state to you, that besides seeking God Josiah served him; that is, he not only sought after him for his own happiness, but did every thing to please God and promote the glory of his name, and serve him in the world. Only think of the condescension of God! See his angels and archangels in heaven that are continually serving him, and yet he is so good that he accepts the services of poor sinful creatures like Josiah, of poor sinful creatures like you and me! How did Josiah serve him? He served him as a king: he first put away idolatry out of the land, and then he sought to purify the temple for his service and worship; and then, after that, he caused the law to be read to the people, and then he made the passover be observed; and the reform over the whole kingdom was quite wonderful. Josiah served the Lord as a king; oh! but how can a poor boy or girl serve the Lord? Josiah might well do so, for he was a king; but what can I do? Now, I do not mean to say that you can do so much as Josiah; that would be absurd. You cannot do so much as he; but then God just accepts from us what we can give him, whether little or much, and it is the disposition he looks to, not the service itself; and if you serve God as much as you can in the place he gives to you in this present world, you are just following the example of Josiah, and doing what is well-pleasing in the sight of God. Oh! what a blessing that a poor little child can serve the Lord, and that the Lord will be pleased with whatever you do for his glory, and to the honour of his name!

My fourth observation is this, that though

Josiah was a king, his piety was his highest honour and glory. Some young people have very extravagant notions of the glory of kings and queens; they imagine them to be continually surrounded with something fine, splendid, brilliant, dazzling; they think of them with their crowns on their heads, with their servants around them, and with all the parade and pomp of royalty and magnificence, and say, What a fine thing it is to be a king or a queen! Well, it may be so in the estimation of this world; but remember that the chief glory of this Josiah, though a great king in the world in his day, was, that he was a religious and a good man; that was his highest honour. You are disposed to think, that when a rich man as a religious man comes to the church, and perhaps takes his place at the Lord's table, he is showing respect to religion; and sometimes the rich man is fool enough to think that he is putting honour on religion when he is putting disgrace on religion. No; remember this, that whatever glory a king, a good and a just king may have, all the glory of his greatness and of his kindness to his subjects is as nothing, as the glory he derives from religion; he gives no glory to religion, religion gives glory to him. If he gives countenance to religion by his example, that is nothing more than he is called to do. Now, perhaps I should make a more particular application. There are some rich men whom I have heard profaning the name of God. Perhaps when you have been amusing yourselves, you have heard some of these rich men taking God's name in vain. Now, I ask you, do you think the vice committed the less, because it is committed by a rich man? No; the man dishonours himself; he brings his rank and station into discredit. Now, the poor are particularly honoured. If I were to put the question to some of you, Who was the greatest person in human form that ever existed upon earth? You would at once answer, the Lord Jesus Christ. Then who was the poorest that ever existed in the world? You might be a little more at a loss to answer this; but some would say The Lord Jesus Christ. What an honour to poverty, and how did he bring into contempt the majesty of this world! My young friends, think it no dishonour to be poor. If you be pious, though you are poor, you are held in the highest estimation in the sight of God. In the language of Jesus, "I know that ye are poor, but ye are rich." You may think this a contradiction, but the meaning is, that though poor in the eyes of this world—though they had

little or no money, they were rich in the favour of God.

There is not one of you that may not be a king. The Bible says, with respect to every real Christian, that he is a king and a priest unto God. There is not one of you that may not have riches unspeakably greater than all the riches that this world can give—treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal. Will you seek these things? Then ask them of God from whom alone they can be obtained. Seek the Lord Jesus Christ as your Redeemer, and the blessed inheritance that is to be found in him. Now I have just to conclude, with entreating that you remember what I have been saying to you this evening. If you go away home and never think more of what you have heard,

of what use will it be that you have come into the house of prayer? You have appeared with your companions, and taken your seats in these pews, but if you have not embraced in your minds something that will do you good, something that will awaken you to seek the Lord, you have come to no purpose. Remember Josiah sought the Lord in his youth. Remember, then, your Creator in the days of your youth. But if there be any wicked children here, as I doubt not but there are, then I have just to say to them, that their blood is on their own heads. I have told them this evening what to do. May the Lord enable you, even the most thoughtless and hardened among you, to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to seek him with the whole heart, that God may be found of you, and that you may be partakers of his salvation.

 This sermon was preached to a very young auditory. It is written in a style of great simplicity, the first merit in a discourse addressed to very young children. The Scottish Pulpit contains several discourses by this talented divine, addressed to adults.

THE SHORTNESS AND UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE;

A FUNERAL SERMON PREACHED ON THE FORENOON OF SABBATH, 2D MARCH, 1834,
OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF ANDREW BROWN, D.D., PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC
AND BELLES LETTRES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,

By the Rev. ANDREW GRANT, D.D.,

One of the Ministers of St. Andrew's Church.

“Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.”—MATTHEW xxiv. 44.

“It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment.” From this there is no discharge. Death comes alike to the righteous and the wicked—to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not. Death levels all distinctions; and the king upon the throne is not more secure from his stroke than the meanest of his subjects. Your fathers—where are they? and the prophets—do they live for ever? Health and beauty, wit and learning, wisdom and strength, are all equally, and without distinction, levelled by his hand. The stroke of death is so certain and unerring, and the time of its approach so very uncertain, that the sacred writers have taken occasion in a variety of ways to inculcate a constant watchfulness, and habitual preparation for this event. This was the subject of the Psalmist's prayer, when he said, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” He does not wish to know the exact number of days he had to live; but that God would give him such a practical conviction of the certainty of death, and of the uncertainty of life, as would lead him to devote the remainder of

his days to his praise and glory, and to such an improvement of time, as that, when about to be removed to eternity, he might be enabled to say, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.” “Be ye also ready,” is the language of our text; “for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” That we may be induced to lay aside all those excuses so often appealed to for delaying this necessary duty, I shall, in discoursing to you on this subject, briefly set before you the shortness, and fleeting nature, and uncertainty of life; and, secondly, inquire how it happens that the shortness and uncertainty of life so seldom lead men to think of and prepare for leaving it; and, thirdly, state some of the comforts and advantages of being prepared for death.

I. In the first place, then, let us set before you the scriptural account of the shortness and uncertainty of human life. As the sacred writers, in all their views of human life, are anxious that we should acquire such dispositions as will render us useful in this life and fit for another, so they are at great pains to impress our souls with the

shortness and uncertainty of life ; to accomplish which we find them sometimes using the plainest language, sometimes employing the most beautiful and striking figures, and sometimes exhibiting the most moving and affecting circumstances. In the first ages the life of man was prolonged in some to nearly a thousand years ; but, when men began to grow more corrupt, and to think of this life as the place they would choose for ever to dwell in, and to forget that future life for which they were destined, God was pleased to shorten the life of man, and to confine its utmost limits to a hundred and twenty years. Afterwards, as we are assured by the same divine authority, we find that threescore years and ten sum up the life of man ; and that, in the few cases in which this term is exceeded, it is accompanied with toil and trouble. How short is this term when compared with the duration of the earth ! "One generation passeth away and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth for ever." How short is this space when compared with that of the first inhabitants of the earth ! "If a man live many years and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many." But Scripture not only represents the life of man to be short, even when it reaches its utmost bounds, but tells us that it flies away rapidly and imperceptibly even when prolonged to seventy years. Thus Job compares his life to a ship which passeth through the waves, and to the eagle that hasteth to the prey. The Psalmist tells us that life runs like a river, that it passeth away as a sleep, and flees as swift as a shadow, when the cloud, whose representation the shadow is, is hurried away on the wings of the wind. In the New Testament also, the question is put : "What is your life ?" and the answer is, "It is a vapour that appeareth for a little, and then vanisheth away." Scripture and experience agree not only in representing life as of short duration, and passing imperceptibly away, but as uncertain as to the time of its termination. As nothing is more certain than death, so nothing is more uncertain than the time of its coming. Our Saviour emphatically compares it to the coming of a thief in the night ; and, therefore, tells us to be ready, for we know not the hour in which the Son of man cometh. Though the Scriptures abound with examples illustrative of this, they have but little effect upon us. How little did the haughty Pharaoh think the sea was so soon to be his grave, when, in the height of his ambition, he resolved to satiate his revenge upon

Israel ! Where have you found one who did not wish the time of his departure to be protracted ? Is not every person cut off sooner than he expected ? And how can it be otherwise, when you consider the diseases and accidents to which every stage of life is liable ? None are able to evade the stroke of death. He who glories in his strength and in the vigour of his constitution, sometimes falls a victim to his confidence ; nor can the strongest and most healthy say, that he is one hour farther removed from death, than he who is in the paroxysm of a fever or in declining years. That all shall die is certain ; but whether we shall have warning by sickness, or be cut off by a sudden stroke, is a secret shut up in the counsels of heaven. Seeing that no advantages of youth, or vigour, or health, or strength give any security from the stroke of death ; seeing, from every day's experience, those younger and stronger, as well as those weaker than ourselves, going down to the house appointed for all living ; seeing that we know neither the day nor the hour in which this event shall take place ; and seeing that sooner or later it will befall us, and in such an hour as we think not, let us work to-day while it is called to-day, as night approaches when no man can work.

II. This brings us to the second head of discourse—to inquire how the shortness and uncertainty of life so seldom lead men to think of and prepare for leaving it. One cause why men are not led by the shortness and uncertainty of life to apply their hearts unto wisdom and mind their latter end, is want of consideration. While confirmed wickedness ruins thousands, thoughtlessness and want of due consideration ruin tens of thousands. "Men know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither will they understand ; they consider not that they do evil, and therefore it is that no man repenteth him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done ? Every man turneth to his wickedness as the horse rusheth into the battle, for they consider not in their hearts that God remembereth all their wickedness." Would we consider the uncertainty of our continuance here, it would soon put an end to the pleasures and enjoyments of the world—would we consider that death will soon remove us from this passing scene into the presence of a just and impartial judge, who will render to every one of us according to his works, and that the sentence passed upon us can never be reversed, thousands, who fall a prey to vice and folly, would escape their contagion. Accordingly, when God complains that neither mercy nor judgment would reclaim his peo-

ple, he assigns this as the reason: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me! The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." While men occupy their most serious thoughts, and employ their utmost exertions to acquire riches and honours, and to make themselves happy in this world, in which they are sure they cannot continue long, and from which they may be removed in a moment; is it not strange that they should continue indifferent to the concerns of a future state in which they shall be happy or miserable for ever? Consider the means which God employs, and the concern he shows to arouse you from this lethargy. Sometimes he expresses a *wish* that men would consult their highest interests. "Oh! that men were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end." Sometimes he *commands* them in the most authoritative terms, such as, "Thus saith the Lord." Let us seriously consider, then, what will become of us when death will remove us from the present scene. Shall we survive the present life and live for ever? If so, what need that we should be wise in time, and mind the things that belong to our eternal peace, before they be for ever hid from our eyes!

Again, another cause why men are not led by the shortness and uncertainty of life to think of and prepare for leaving it, is the love of this world and its enjoyments. They are so immersed in business, their thoughts are so engrossed, and their time so wholly employed in procuring the honours and comforts of life, in securing what they have acquired, or in employing them for increasing their present joy and happiness, that they have neither time nor inclination to think of futurity. Some are employed in passing their days in joy and pleasure—hurrying from place to place in quest of new scenes of entertainment. Others are climbing up the steep ascent of ambition in close pursuit of fame or power, little thinking that, when death mixes the ashes of all things, these distinctions will cease. Others are laying up treasures without thinking who shall gather them, or that God this night may require their souls at their hand. Would you but think that, though these increase, death will soon snatch you from them; would you but weigh them in the balance with the awful concerns of eternity, you would not neglect for a moment preparing for that change which infallibly will

come, and which may be sooner than you are aware. Ask yourselves, then, this question, "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Again, another cause why men are not led by the shortness and uncertainty of life to apply their hearts unto wisdom, is a vague impression, which all are apt to cherish, that death is a very distant event. Men may think, that when this life approaches its termination, it is time enough to prepare for leaving it. When enjoying youth, and health, and good spirits, we think fourscore years to be an immense space of time. When we look forward from youth to old age, we fancy the years that lie between those periods to be very long; but when we look from old age to youth, we are forced to say, "few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." But whatever be the future period of our life it is folly to reckon upon it. If all are liable to a thousand diseases and accidents, why suppose that we are only to die in old age? If we consider the causes of death, and our extreme liability to be affected by them, we must know that nothing but the merciful hand of God could spare us for a day or even an hour. "To-day," if ye will hear the voice of mercy speaking from the Gospel, "harden not your hearts. Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

III. Thisleads me, in the last place, to state some of the comforts and advantages of being prepared for death. Your time will permit me only to mention them. In the first place, then, preparing for death secures to us the testimony of a good conscience, connected with the approbation of God, and the happiness that results from both; for if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God. If we are reconciled to him—if we have our sins pardoned, and our services accepted through Christ the beloved, and are fitted for holy living, or happy dying, what can possibly interrupt our tranquillity? This is that peace which the world can neither give nor take away; this is that peace of God that passeth all understanding, keeping the heart and mind through Christ Jesus.

Secondly. I may mention, also, that preparation for death alleviates the afflictions of life, and affords much consolation under them. The true Christian sees in affliction the hand of God, and knows that, by his bless-

ing, it will work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

I may mention, also, that preparation for death frees us from all slavish and tormenting fear of that event, and makes us even comfortable under its approach. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." He only can say, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

You easily perceive that I have been led to this train of thinking, by what has lately here taken place. Your late worthy pastor, who so long with his able colleague has directed the public worship of God in this congregation, though now dead, will live long in your remembrance. His character I need scarcely attempt to delineate to *you*. Many of you knew him intimately; you respected and loved him, and he deserved your affection. He was possessed of a vigorous understanding, which he cultivated and improved by much reading, and extensive and just views of history, philosophy, and real life, and, above all, by an intimate acquaintance with the principles of genuine and practical religion. He was also possessed of much prudence and discretion, which disposed him to discharge his duty with propriety among the various classes of society, with which he had to associate. He was as remarkable for the qualities of the heart, as for those of the understanding. In regard to others, while he knew human nature well, and was candid and unsuspicuous, he was himself capable of strong and lasting attachment. He was neither apt to give nor to take offence. Free from malice, when he received injuries, he sought not revenge; he waited for a return of good-will from others, and was ever ready to forgive. This temper endeared him to his friends, and was constantly increasing their number. If friendship be calculated to soothe the griefs, to alleviate the misfortunes, to refine the joys of humanity, to correct, to counsel, and encourage us in the discharge of our duty, such a friend as you have lost was at once an ornament and a blessing to society. As to his public ministry, he was impressed with a deep sense of the importance of the sacred office. He had correct and sound views of religion, which he sometimes happily illustrated and impressed upon his audience with copious and affecting eloquence. He was ever more solicitous to impress on the minds of men an abiding practical sense of divine truth, than to secure their applause. Ever anxious to better the

heart, and to improve the mind, his object was to turn the attention of his people to the one thing needful; to reconcile them to God through Christ; to rescue the vicious, if possible, from sinful habits; to direct the serious to higher attainments, and to teach all how to resist temptations and discharge their duties. Able and ready to give counsel and advice, whether in temporal or religious concerns, instead of encouraging narrowness of sentiment, his object was to draw the minds of men together by the ties of affection and of love. Guided by scriptural rules he dismissed those idle questions which minister to strife, and encouraged men to follow after those things which minister to peace. As a member of Presbytery, he was not much interested in its proceedings, yet he was firm to his purpose, and, at the same time, respectful to those who differed from him in opinion. As a companion, he was instructive, cheerful, and inoffensive, exhibiting the strictest propriety in his own manner, and giving no countenance to any thing improper on the part of others; and those who saw him amid the scenes of domestic life, saw, with delight, an example to follow, and, at the same time, saw that example rewarded with as much comfort and happiness as fall to the lot of man on this side the grave. It is impossible, I think, that these good qualities could be so long exhibited among you, without securing esteem and good-will among those with whom he lived, and for whom he laboured. His loss, therefore, will be long remembered with tenderness, and deeply lamented; but you must know that all the drops of bitterness, mingled with our cup, are sent by divine and unerring wisdom; and you must therefore say, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good; his will be done." He has now gone to that world where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest. Let us remember what is written, when we are tossed by the tumults of this agitating scene, "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." Hear how this blessed prospect cheered the heart of the Apostle with hope and confidence! "I have fought," says he, "a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Mark the perfect man, then, and be-

hold the upright, for the latter end of that man is peace. "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Who, Christians, in this view of things, would live here always? Who would wish to recal his best friend from that place where there is no more sorrowing—where there are no more tears nor death? When this mortal shall put on immortality—when "the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads, they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." O let us all consider these things, and lay them to heart. Let us consider this dispensation as sent by heaven for our improvement; for, though the hand of God is visible in all his works, yet it is often not seen by the careless and the indifferent; but great afflictions are observed, and arouse the soul to seriousness. So is it written,

"It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting. Sorrow is better than laughter; for, by the sadness of the countenance, the heart is made better." Consider and ponder over the instructions your late pastor has delivered, and the example he set before you. Let the world see that the precious talents which you have been intrusted with for a time, and for which you are still accountable, have been regulating your conduct and promoting your edification. Let the world see that you have profited by his example, by copying it in your lives, and by following his example who, through faith and patience, we trust, is now inheriting the promises. This is a tribute of respect to his memory more honourable to him, and more profitable to you, than all the tears that can be shed. By this conduct you will adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour; by this example you will lure the vicious into his service, and, in the end, you will save your own soul.

PREPARATION FOR DEATH;

A FUNERAL SERMON, PREACHED ON THE AFTERNOON OF SABBATH, 2D MARCH, 1834,
OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF ANDREW BROWN, D.D., PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC
AND BELLES LETTRES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,

By the Very Rev. G. H. BAIRD, D.D.,

Principal of the University, and Senior Minister of the High Church, Edinburgh.

"Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not."—LUKE xii. 40.

My friends, I have selected this text, as thinking it would suggest an appropriate theme of meditation in the saddening circumstances in which we are this day assembled; and I have a sincere conviction that the few plain, general illustrative remarks, which I am to make on the subject, will meet with your attention. My prayer is, that the Spirit of God, descending on our assembly, may bless the observations made for your present spiritual improvement, and for your preparation for that hour when the Son of Man cometh. That hour is the hour of death—when the Lord of the heavens will recal his earthly children from the state in which he has now placed them, and will require from them an account of the deeds done in the body. You are feeling, I am satisfied, that this hour, both in itself and in its consequences, forms the most important and critical event in the history of our being. It is uniformly found that its approach fills the mind of him, who is deeply impressed with his mortal condition, with anxiety; for he sees that that event must determine, unalterably, and for ever, the condition of his being. Surely, then, my friends, I am safe

to appeal to your understandings, and say that it becomes us to consider with reverence the preparation to meet this hour with peace and in hope; surely it is becoming us to consider the motives why we should employ the means of this preparation. The painful impression death makes on man does sometimes overwhelm the judgment even of the good, and has led them to prepare for it, rather by superstitious practices than by habits of actual sanctity. Yes, my friends, in the history of the Church there have been individuals who, in this view, have thought it their duty to retire from the sphere where their Maker had placed them—to renounce the social enjoyments of life—to withdraw from the intercourse of their brethren, and, in the cheerless gloom of solitude, to devote themselves to perpetual silence and prayer. Others, again, there have been, of a description somewhat allied, who have been found, from a morbid melancholy of spirit, to frequent the chambers of the dying, more than the scenes of active employment—who have loved to wander incessantly amid the sepulchres of the departed, closing their eyes against the beauties of nature, and trying

by every means, to render death and corruption familiar objects of meditation. But how mistaken is this view! for what is it but to desert the universe of God, and the situation where he has placed them—to sink before their time into the grave, and with ingratitude, for the blessings which Providence has placed around them, to neglect the motives to industry, activity, and mental purposes? As moral beings, it becomes us to anticipate our latter end—an event which our indifference may have a tendency to embitter and disquiet. The conviction that it cannot be far distant, and may come in a moment as a thief in the night, ought to prompt us to anxiety and diligence in all the duties of the christian character—ought to excite us to have our loins girded about, and our lights burning, and to be like men waiting the coming of their Lord ; that when he cometh and knocketh, we may open unto him immediately. Now, in these two particulars to which I have made a general allusion, in freedom, in the hour of death, from every consideration that would disturb the mind, and in the possession of the qualifications proper for our future condition, consists the true preparation for death—a preparation which will deprive it of its power to frighten us, and which will even convert it into a messenger of peace.

In the first place, then, to prepare us for death, we should be careful in the day of health and strength to remove from us every incumbrance, every thing that might tend to embarrass our spirits in the hour of their departure. Now, of particulars of this description, there are many which will naturally suggest themselves to every thinking mind. I shall mention particularly but three only ; and the first of these I shall merely speak of without any lengthened illustration, because we conceive that the bare mention of it will at once show its importance. If a man, who is going down to the grave, and is to take no more a share in the business of the world, is to leave a family and surviving friends behind him, who are to depend on any arrangement he may make for the appropriation of the substance Providence has enabled him to have ; surely, in these circumstances, he will deliver his mind from a most disturbing encumbrance and source of disquietude in the hour of death, if, while in health and vigour, he makes such arrangement as will prevent the possibility of that which he is to bequeath, becoming an inheritance of strife, and demoralizing and unhappy discord among those whom he loved while he was living, and who now lament over him when he is gone.

The next points which I shall endeavour to discuss at some farther length, are, the anguish inflicted by the consideration of too inordinate an attachment to the objects we are about to leave, and the anguish inflicted on the man, conscious at heart at his dying hour, of sins yet unrepented of. Each of these is a source of disquietude sufficient to overwhelm the heart of a thinking man. Besides the uneasiness arising from being conscious that he is leaving this life without due arrangement of his worldly affairs, his departing spirit may be sadly disquieted by having indulged an immoderate and undue attachment to wordly objects ; for what is more likely to disturb the composure of his death-bed than departing for ever from all that has been habitually dear to him ? The man who clings to this world, and expects from it all his happiness, is shaken to the very centre of his soul when the warning comes to his ear, which summons him away. It is not to be expected that the links which had grown so closely—which had entwined themselves as it were into the very substance of his heart, shall be torn asunder without a painful disruption. If, therefore, you wish to meet the hour of death with tranquillity, suffer not the things of this world to occupy a larger share of attention than is due to them. Expect from them nothing but, what they can furnish—a mere temporary sustenance and refreshment on a road to a richer and more durable entertainment. Enjoy, while you may, the innocent delights which Providence has poured around you, but with the abiding consideration, that these cannot last long—that the fairest flowers are soon to wither, and that your everlasting portion lasts beyond them. Now, to secure you from an undue attachment to them, recollect often, This is not my home ; here I have no continuing city ; the joys of time are fleeting as they are delusive, and every thing reminds me of their approaching departure ; I am myself but a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth, and the men whom I leave are but passing shadows ; I am walking every day amidst the ashes of the dead, and I will soon follow to that house which is appointed for all living. What, then, is my duty ; what my business ? I will place my happiness on more substantial enjoyments—on the favour of God, and the possession of a pure and pious mind. If the good things of this world fall to my lot, I will use them as gifts from my heavenly Father, in promoting his glory and my own spiritual improvement ; I will use them as means furnished for improving my own

holiness ; and, if withdrawn from them, I will resign them with composure into the hands of Him from whom they flowed. " Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither : the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord." Yes, my friends, be assured that a train of thought and of feeling like this, if excited and impressed frequently and deeply on your hearts, will deliver you from the enslaving, the corrupting, fetters of worldly attachment. It will not, indeed, make you indifferent about temporal blessings—about them you should not be indifferent, as they are the gifts of God, and tokens to you of his love—but it will show them to you in their true colour as passing, perishing objects on which your enjoyment should not rest. It will prepare you to meet without alarm your separation from them, and make you quit them, as the passenger does his resting-place, or, as the wayfaring man leaves in the morning the shelter he has experienced over night, grateful to those whom he is about to leave ; remembering that this is not his home, he has formed no indissoluble attachment to it, but fixed it on another land, where are the all-endearing objects of his heart.

But this calmness on the bed of death presupposes still another thing. It presupposes that the conscience of the dying man does not alarm him with the remembrance of unrepented and unforsaken transgressions ; for, in vain will a dying man expect tranquillity of conscience, from having arranged his temporal concerns, if in that hour his heart is racked with fears of guilt. At no time, indeed, can a wicked man enjoy undisturbed peace. Even in the midst of prosperity, outraged conscience will at times interrupt the dream of enjoyment ; but, at the approach of dissolution, when the body is enfeebled by disease—when the soul trembles on the brink of unknown futurity—when the pleasures of sin have lost their charms—how shall he support the accusations which memory recalls to him ? The sins which then rise to his remembrance will create unutterable forebodings, and harass him with most agonizing horrors. Now, if you wish to avoid being pierced with feelings like these on your death-bed—if you wish to lie on your death-bed in peace, you must avoid the sin which racks you with torment ; you must accustom yourselves to view the pursuits, in which you are now engaged, through the light in which they will appear to you at the approach of death ; you must resolve and act, uniformly and universally dependent on the grace of

God. You must neither think nor speak what you would not wish to meet again in conscience and recollection at the brink of the grave. If, through the feebleness of human nature, you have suffered temptation to overcome, you must not permit the breach which is made in your peace of mind to leave you unprepared ; you must exert yourself, by doing what in you lies by repentance, to regret the wrong you have committed ; you must undo the heavy burden you have taken upon you ; you must give again what you have unjustly acquired, that, through the merits of your Redeemer, the sins you have committed may not be charged against you in the hour of death, nor in the day of judgment.

But, I have now to state, that it is not only necessary to be freed from whatever disquiets the mind, we must possess, in the second place, the qualifications that will fit us for looking forward with peace and hope to the joy into which we are about to enter. Furnished with these qualifications, we shall be ready to lie down in peace, and see death as the messenger of God sent to conduct us by a short and easy passage to everlasting rest. Now, do you ask me to say what the qualifications are to which I have alluded ? I say, then, that the possession of such qualifications is the great end of the Gospel of Christ. Now the means are faith in the doctrines it teaches, and the holy habits and practices flowing from that faith. A firm faith in the doctrines of the Gospel, and the habitual practice of righteousness, are the best and most effective preparation for peace at death. A firm, steady faith in the doctrines of Christ not only furnishes hope and support to the human heart under all the sorrows of our mortal condition, but strong consolation on a bed of languor and approaching dissolution. The Gospel of Christ teaches us to regard every event as the appointment of our Father who is deeply interested in our welfare ; who watches over us with concern for our happiness ; who contrives a gracious plan for the salvation of our souls, and will permit nothing to befall us that shall not ultimately be for our good. The Gospel especially prepares us for that solemn event which terminates for ever here the existence and hopes of humanity. It does not, indeed, prevent the approach of death ; but it teaches the believer that grace which destroyed its power, and delivers them who, through fear of it, "were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Yes ; that last darkness which had settled on the grave vanishes now before the Sun of right-

eousness ; and, oh ! believer, what refreshing views does this truth present to your eye ! Entering the dark valley, you see before you the throne of God established in mercy and love ; you see a Redeemer who died for you encircled with an innumerable company of angels and spirits of just men made perfect ; you see innumerable blessings flowing from the light of his countenance, and life eternal in the heavens given to all who, by patient continuance in well-doing, have sought for glory, and honour, and immortality. Are not these glorious and consolatory prospects ? Surely to him who will behold them with an eye of steady faith, and has no cloud of guilt hanging over his conscience, death cannot be the subject of much alarm ; and, therefore, in the view of its approach, it certainly becomes you all to render these prospects familiar to your thoughts—to study the great truths of the Gospel with seriousness—to believe them with gladness, and rest upon them with the unshaken confidence of deep conviction. Thus, while we lie down on our last bed, our affections will rise towards heaven, which will, at the same time, congratulate us as we are about to ascend. The pangs of separation will be lost in contemplation and the aspirations of the heart when it looks to the glory that remains to be revealed ; and then, rejoicing in hope, we will look on death, not as a punishment, but as a discharge from earthly trials, and a passport for a return to the blessings of a Father's house.

But to prepare us for this delightful frame, we must possess the holy dispositions which correspond to it. Our faith must have effectively reformed our hearts, and wrought within us those graces of the Spirit which will gladden the soul in the hour of dissolution, and fit it for heaven. Works of righteousness are good and profitable for man. They promote our present comfort ; they are the fruits of a steady and pure faith, and have from God himself the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come, and shed blessings innumerable on the bed of the dying. As preparation for our latter end, therefore, we must employ our lives in the practice of duty ; we must follow diligently what conscience and the law of Christ require, and by deeds of religion and beneficence, as far as our situation enables us to perform deeds of beneficence, must lay up for ourselves a source of sweet reflection at the hour of death. Oh ! how comfortable to a dying man is the retrospect of a well-spent life !

ministers of religion, more frequently

than their hearers, are called to the beds of the dying ; and they can tell you that in a wretched hovel an aged widow can be seen, and little to support her dying hour. Yet in the infirmity of her feelings she lifts her languid eye to heaven above, and there is in it a glistening expression of peace and hope, which shows us the grace of the Saviour, in a dying hour, whispering her support, and giving her the exhilarating confidence in that situation of ascending soon to a world where " shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for former things are passed away." With what satisfaction can such a person look back on the course of her life ! Every good Christian of this description feels the satisfaction of a good conscience, and trusts, through the grace of God, for a resting-place in heaven. Cheered by such reflections as these, he can at any time lie down in peace. He comes to his end ripe and mellow as a shock of corn ; for, possessing already the dispositions of heaven, he has only closed his mortal eyes in sleep, and the morning of the resurrection will awake him to the joys of his heavenly Father's house.

Such, then, are the means by which we make ourselves ready for the hour in which the Son of man shall appear ; and, surely, many arguments need not be addressed to the consciences of one and all of you to make you see it your interest and your duty to employ them. The day of your departure is very uncertain, and may be very near. My friends, look around you in quest of many a companion whom you lately saw on the stage of life healthy and more vigorous than others ; and where are they ? Mouldering now on the narrow couch of oblivion ! A voice from their graves comes to your ears, and calls on you to prepare ! Listen all of you—listen to this warning voice ! It accords with the dictates of your experience, and every change in your condition reminds you of it. Infirmities as they grow, and advancing years, announce that the hour of our departure draws near. What, then, remains but to impress it on you ? In this the day of your merciful visitation, mind the things that belong to your peace ; remove from you every thing that might disturb the tranquillity of your last moments ; cherish the disposition to meet your departing hour by faith in Christ, and deeds of righteousness ; lay up treasure in heaven, and thus when the Lord shall receive you to himself, whether in the first watch or in the second —whether to-day or to-morrow, when asleep or when you are awake, he will still find

you ready. Thus at death, no painful recollections will disturb your consciences; no anxious forebodings will alarm your souls. If you live the life of the righteous, you will depart in peace, and your works shall follow you into the habitation whither you are going.

But I come now to the conclusion of the general subject that has led me to submit to your attention certain illustrative views, to prompt you all to instant preparation for the approaching scene of death and judgment. It is, however, a matter of universal experience, that individual instances of mortality, sweeping away from our sight those who are dear to us, touch more sensitively our hearts, and mould them more intensely to solemn purposes. Yes; it is when we mark the perfect man—it is when we behold the upright, and perceive his latter end to be peace, that we feel ourselves most inclined to pray that we may so live and so die as those who are now fallen asleep in Jesus. And, oh! my friends, what instance of mortality should come home, and, convinced I am, has come home, to your bosoms with recollections more mournful or more piously improving than what are awakened by the death of your pastor! Ours is not that high praise that may be poured upon his memory, but still it is right in survivors to dwell on such characters as his. I feel it unnecessary to enter, upon this occasion, into any large detail on those qualities of his character which gave him so much of dignity and excellence; for not only as a man and minister of the Gospel was he known personally to most of those now hearing me, but I am also aware, that in the preceding sermon of this day, and in the sermon yet to be delivered by his sorrowing colleague, ample development of these qualities has or will be laid before you; yet to me it may still be permitted to say a few words of my departed friend, with whom I enjoyed a long continued intercourse. I would say of him, that his Maker had bestowed upon him a strong and masculine understanding, that he cultivated his powers with very assiduous success, and that, in consequence, his attainments in literature, science, morals, and christian knowledge, were of a high order. Without any sinister bias in his bosom, and dictated solely by a deep and serious impression of divine truths, these truths he defended and asserted with independent and fearless firmness; and whether in speech

or in writing, he clothed them with a style at once varied and flowing. His was the soundness of Gospel doctrine, which he rightly divided as a wise workman who needed not to be ashamed. To the earnestness of the practical lessons which he delivered from the pulpit you are living witnesses; and my conviction is complete that you cannot recall the substance of what he delivered, and the language in which he expressed himself, without respect for the talents they displayed, without affectionate regard for the gratification they gave to your taste, and the edifying improvement they ministered under God to your understandings, your consciences and your hearts. He lived so that the concerns of those immediately connected with him by special duties were never neglected; and, while in private society he mingled with friends, he made himself uniformly, not only esteemed, but appreciated for dispositions amiable and friendly, for principles upright and pure, and for virtuous and pious habits that were altogether unostentatious. And in justice to his memory, I must still farther say, that, in another official situation under my inspection, the prelections he delivered were composed with uncommon care, and that he manifested uncommon skill in his labours for the progressive improvement of his pupils. During a course of years in which he was called to continue these labours, his depth of thought and extensive erudition were conspicuous, and in their bearing and tendency were powerfully calculated to promote the moral and intellectual cultivation of the youth who were committed to his charge.

Such is a very brief and meagre view of the character and merits of the friend you have lost; but I trust that, though brief and meagre, this outline of the qualities which distinguished the character you now deplore, will long dwell on your memories. *My prayer to God is, and let it be the prayer of all present, that we may be led, by the grace of God, to grow wiser and better by the saddening and instructing dispensation which has taken our brother from us; that, like him, we may live uprightly, unblamably, holily; that, like him, we may possess a spirit of christian patience, resignation, faith, peace and hope; since we know not the hour when the Son of man cometh. And may God in his infinite goodness answer this prayer.*
Amen.

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THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 29TH MARCH, 1834.

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**THE REWARD OF UNWEARIED DILIGENCE IN THE WORK OF
THE LORD;**

A FUNERAL SERMON PREACHED ON THE FORENOON OF SUNDAY, 9TH MARCH, 1834.
OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF THE LATE REV. ANDREW BROWN, D.D., PROFESSOR
OF RHETORIC AND BELLES LETTRES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,

By the Rev. THOMAS MACKNIGHT, D.D.,
One of the Ministers of the Old Church, Edinburgh.

“And let us not be wearied in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.”—GAL. vi. 9.

THE teachers of righteousness engage us in the practice of true religion, by displaying her as adorned with every character that captivates the heart, and as the means of promoting our honour and happiness. For the beauty and excellence of what is good, they appeal to the natural uncorrupted sentiments of the mind, which is formed to approve the generous and praiseworthy in moral conduct; and its advantages, in point of interest and well-being, they prove by examples drawn from the experience of human life. Here, however, while vice is often seen triumphant and virtue oppressed—while the wicked prosper and good men are found unfortunate—the conclusions of moralists in favour of religion do not appear altogether satisfactory; and in this respect many obstacles occur to the success of their counsels.

To vindicate the divine administration, and remove these *apparent* discouragements to well-doing, wise men early saw the necessity and discerned the reason of considering the present life, as only the introduction to a more beautiful and perfect state of things, where all the inequalities of moral distribution in good and evil will be done away. For this purpose they laboured to establish the salutary doctrine of immortality. But over all their inquiries, when conducted by the unassisted powers of human reason, an impenetrable veil of darkness, doubt and uncertainty hung; and it seemed an insuperable objection, that death,

the inevitable law of nature, to all appearance dissolves our frame into non-existence. Thus, integrity must still have wanted its chief support.

Now, however, doubt and uncertainty are wholly removed. Immortality is clearly and surely revealed by the Gospel. The Sun of righteousness has arisen to illumine the darkness of the mind—to convert probability into assurance—to show us distinctly a world to come; and the day-spring from on high guides our feet in the path of life. Jesus Christ hath given us the victory over death; and we know assuredly, if a man die that he shall live again. Thanks be to God! a state of recompense is thus held forth to the righteous in the Lord; and every discouragement to virtuous conduct, from the temporary evils of this life, vanishes in respect of those who cherish faith, hope and patience. For eternal life, through Jesus Christ, will be conferred as the gift, not indeed of debt, but of free grace on all who, by a patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality. “Therefore,” says the Apostle to the Corinthians, “my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord;” or, as he exhorts the Galatians on the same principle of future retribution, “Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not;” in which he makes a beautiful allusion to the labour

and reward of the husbandman, who, if he persists with unwearied diligence in the necessary work of preparing the ground and watching the produce, reaps, by the blessing of Providence, in due season, the well-earned fruit of his toils; but if he is slothful and faint in labour—if he is afraid of the morning dews, or shrinks from the rays of the mid-day sun, he must suffer disappointment in the expected harvest.

In directing your attention to this subject, let us begin with a short account of what we are to understand by the work of the Lord, and by not wearying in well-doing.

The work of the Lord, in doing which we are called not to weary, is the duty which God requires of man in all the obligations of piety, faith and virtue; or the practice of true religion, as pointed out by the joint instruction of natural conscience, and of revelation. To be steadfast, or not to weary in it, is to perform the task assigned us of amending our lives, growing in grace, and working out our eternal salvation with unabating ardour, firmness, and unrelaxing diligence, in all its extent of well-doing. It is to hold our integrity fast unto the end, in contradistinction even to many professing Christians, who may at times feel and act according to the Spirit of the Gospel, but often yield to the corruption of the heart or the power of temptation; and who, amid the occupations and cares of life, grow weary in well-doing, from the discouragements they frequently meet with; or, are irresolute in the service of religion, and unstable in the practice of virtue.

But we are not merely to continue or not weary, we are also to *abound* in the work of the Lord; that is, to be constantly making progress in holiness and increasing in the fruits of righteousness, by adding grace to grace, and strength to strength, in the life of God; by giving all diligence so as to make our calling and election sure. For righteousness is likened to a seed sown in the heart which ought to be ever growing and ripening, till it reach the size of a tree of life shedding fruits of immortality. It is a talent given us to improve into various measures of moral profit; it is a spark of heavenly fire which is to burn within us, till it inflame the whole soul with the pure ardour of all divine and moral excellence. If man, in these respects, grow not in righteousness, nor advance to perfection, he is called the barren fig-tree which will be cut down; he

is the unprofitable servant whom his Lord at his coming will not approve; he is insensible to virtue, dead to godliness, and utterly unqualified for the joys of heaven. Now a true Christian must have the same mind as Christ; he ought to be grounded and confirmed in all the principles of the Gospel doctrine. According to the expressive language of Scripture, Christ should dwell in his heart as his life and the spring of his whole conduct.

Supposing, then, the same Spirit in us which was also in Jesus, and setting before us the exalted prospect of a glorious issue to all our labour in the work of the Lord, let us next inquire, by divine grace, into those principles of mind which are the foundation of being steadfast and not wearying in the work of the Lord.

The first principle of steadfast and abounding righteousness is a constant sense of the obligation of the divine law. He who truly partakes of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, is formed anew to better sentiments. Placed in the light of the divine fellowship, he looks on sin as moral darkness; he regards the will of God as the indispensable law of what is right, and as the instrument of his own happiness. And he feels himself bound by the strictest ties to the unceasing obedience and imitation of Christ, who, although not originally bound to obey, voluntarily subjected himself to the law, that he might illustrate to his people the beauty and excellence and indispensable obligation of obedience. Thus, the Christian, in all his conduct acts agreeably to the dictates of religion. Uninfluenced by the pride, the security, or the indifference of the worldly spirit, he devotes his powers to God who gave them, and more and more abounds in goodness. Would you, then, maintain your integrity and grow in righteousness? At all times feel the supreme and indispensable obligation of the divine law. The principles of action which men devise, are weak and unstable like their authors, and varying with the changes of interest, fashion and humour, which give them birth. But that which we now recommend, partakes of the energy and immutability that are the chief characters of the divine nature from which it flows. It is pure as heaven, strong as Sion, and lasting as moral obligation. It is thus that religion and virtue are indissolubly connected. To break them asunder, as some have impiously attempted to do, is to tear from religion whatever is amiable in the human

heart—to sap the foundation at once of sorrow, and suffering, and death, for sin. morals and of social happiness—and, in the vain presumption of soaring to heaven on the wings of a barren, speculative faith, to abandon the only course of practical belief and good works going together hand in hand, which God himself has pointed out as the only true and saving way of conducting his people to the dwellings of immortal bliss.

The second principle of standing fast and growing in righteousness, so as not to weary in well-doing, is that of love. Love is the sovereign attribute of God in relation to man. Was it not love, to fill the universe with animated beings, and to pour the riches of beauty and happiness over creation? Was it not love, to form man after the image of God, and to breathe into him a thinking, reasonable, immortal spirit? And is it not love, that at this moment we think, and feel, and hear, and see amidst the enjoyment of the light of the sun, all the means of temporal being, and every thing that sweetens life? Then hath God above all commended his love, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for the soul of man to give it eternal glory in the heavens. His life, his doctrine, his agony, his death, his resurrection, and his intercession—all were love passing knowledge.

Now, from the sense of all this goodness, will not the man, who is not dead to every generous feeling in human nature, love the Lord his Maker and Saviour with all his heart, and soul, and strength? Will not the love of Christ constrain him? And will not the energy of this divine principle transfuse itself, from his inmost bosom, through all his conduct, so as to prove a perpetual spring of unwearied activity in well-doing? This we are told is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and to abound in love to God and man, is the means of being established or rendered steadfast, unblamable in holiness before the Lord.

The third principle of unwearied steadfastness and increase in the work of the Lord, is a conviction of the evil of sin. In this respect, a good man partakes of the Spirit of that holy and righteous Being who hateth the workers of iniquity, and with whom evil cannot dwell. He despises what is mean, and abhors what is impure with every false and wicked way. The sentiment we describe is, moreover, quickened by fellow-feeling with the Saviour of man, who, laying aside the form of God, gave himself up to

Now, in all cases, sympathy is a powerful spring of action; it interests the heart and raises every power of the soul. Above all, in this concern, its whole energy is called forth to make the Christian abstain from even the appearance of evil; lest by the commission of any sin, he should crucify afresh the Son of God.

Another principle of unwearied well-doing and increasing righteousness, is, the conviction that holiness is necessary as a qualification of the christian fellowship. The great law of communion with Christ is that of light, purity, and righteousness, in opposition to the spiritual darkness of corruption and sin. If, then, we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, that is sin, "we deceive ourselves," says the Apostle. But if we walk in light or righteousness, then we have communion with the Father and his Son; and, cherished by the rays of divine light from the Sun of righteousness, graces spring up, and virtues flourish in our lives, as the tender herb with the fostering warmth and dew of heaven.

The last principle of holding fast our integrity, so as not to weary in well-doing, is a firm confidence in the declaration, that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord; that if we faint not in well-doing, we shall reap through Jesus Christ the fruit of eternal life and peace. It is the prospect of this that purifies the heart, and exalts the affections beyond the earth to things above. How animating the motive to perseverance and progress in grace, that the fruit of these things shall be peace and joy unspeakable for evermore! In this assurance, the good man breathes ardently after God, and seeks the glory which is with Christ. He rises superior to the ills of life; and no obstacle discourages him from the performance of his duty, however difficult or painful it may be. In the whole discipline of purity and virtue he exercises himself; and his path shines more and more till he is adorned to singe in the glorious hosts of heaven. The world may often repay your endeavours to do good with ingratitude and calamity; and after spending your best years in the service of men, or in quest of temporal happiness, disappointment and vexation may be all your reward. But, my friends, in the christian life, benevolent and powerful is the Master you serve; and none who ever sought to please Him have yet spent their labour in vain.

Such, Christians, are the great principles of continuing steadfast, and not wearying, but always abounding in the work of the Lord: a constant sense of the obligation of the divine law; the power of love; a conviction of the evil of sin, and of the necessity of holiness; and the confidence of future retribution. By the united influence of these principles, you shall be as trees planted by the rivers in the vineyard of God; you shall bring forth fruit in season; and your leaf shall not wither or fall away. You shall, finally, reach the end of all your hopes, even the bliss and glory of heaven.

I now proceed to remind you, Christians, that these principles of unwearied steadfastness in faith and well-doing were habitually inculcated on his people, by your late lamented pastor, with a power of eloquence seldom equalled, and never surpassed. Nor could there be exhibited in real life a more pleasing and attractive example of perseverance, in all that is excellent and praise-worthy, than was uniformly given by my truly estimable friend, in the whole tenor of his christian course. Alas! he is gone! and the affectionate voice, to which you listened with delight and profit for so many years, will no more be heard among us! But, we fondly believe that he is now exalted to reap the fruit of his unfainting diligence in the work of the Lord. And surely, my friends, the precious counsels of divine wisdom, which so abundantly flowed from his lips, will never be effaced from your remembrance!

It was my good fortune to be associated with him in the work of the ministry; and never, I may say, with the warmest feelings of sincerity, could brethren be pronounced, with greater truth, to have lived together in unity for the long period of twenty-four years. [Here the Doctor's emotions completely overpowered him; but, after a short pause, he proceeded.] During seven of these, in which, by the afflictive visitation of Providence, I was completely laid aside from public duty, it is impossible for me to express the kindness and attention I experienced from my worthy colleague, who took on himself the chief burden of my official services. Never shall I find in any servant of the Lord Jesus, more unanimity and harmony of feeling than I experienced in him, who has gone to enjoy the recompence of his earthly labours.

The character and deportment of Dr. Brown have already been so faithfully described in this place, as to leave me only the pleasing task of assembling the whole of

its leading features into one connected view—forming an example of professional excellence truly worthy of imitation.

His education in early life was carefully directed to those studies which were to prepare him for distinction and success in the work of the ministry. The powers of mind, conferred by his Maker, he cultivated with great assiduity; and his attainments in literature, philosophy, and christian knowledge, were indeed of a high order. Whatever titles to professional eminence could be conferred by intellectual endowments of no ordinary value—a highly cultivated literary taste—extensive acquaintance with history, sacred and profane—and, more than all, a profound sense of religious truth in all its range of principle and practice—were amply possessed by Dr. Brown. These riches of theological acquirement, by his powers of eloquence and illustration, he could employ to the best advantage both in his public and in his private ministrations.

Of the nature and importance of his sacred office, no man was ever impressed with a deeper sense. His views of religion and of christian doctrine were correct and sound, conformable equally to Scripture and reason, according to the standards of our Church, and illustrated with great beauty in a glowing, copious, and affecting strain of language. Thus, as a minister of Christ, he was eminently distinguished not only by the soundness of his doctrine, but by his talent of applying it to the practice of life, and the consolation of the wounded spirit, whether under the conviction of sin, or amidst the afflictions which are inseparable from the lot of humanity. In all his ministrations, indeed, he was evidently more solicitous to impress the mind with an abiding sense of divine truth, than to court the vain applause of men. His anxious wish was to better the heart and improve the life. With this view, instead of dwelling on the barren and unedifying topics of controversy in religion, his great practical object was to direct the attention of his people to the one thing needful in being reconciled to God through Christ; to reclaim the vicious from sinful habits; to conduct the serious to higher attainments in knowledge and grace; and to teach all how to resist the temptations, and perform the duties of their several stations in the world.

Nor, was your late respected pastor less remarkable for the qualities of the heart, than for those of the understanding. We are living

of love and tenderness he addressed his counsels of heavenly wisdom and eternal truth to his admiring hearers, who in return regarded him with a reverence and esteem, justly due to his affectionate concern for their spiritual welfare. Instead of betraying the prejudices and narrow feelings of party spirit, he always endeavoured to bring men, however differing in religious opinion, more closely together by the various ties of affection and mutual charity. It was on this principle that he dismissed from his public prelections the idle questions that engender strife, and followed after those things that make for peace, and whereby one may edify another. It was also thus, that although he seldom took a share in the business of the church courts, he was always firm and decided in maintaining those principles and views which, on due reflection, he had adopted.

In all the intercourse of private life his amiable qualities were equally felt. There, my friends, you well knew his affable, cheerful, and kindly manner; you found him ever candid, open, and without guile—able and ready to give counsel and advice either in temporal or in spiritual concerns. Attachments, strong and lasting on his part, were met with reciprocal respect and affection by those with whom he delighted to associate. It was his study in the conduct of life, and in the exercise of a sound discretion, neither to give nor to take offence. Under injury or provocation, he indulged no malignant feelings, nor sought revenge. Such composure became his character as the servant of Him who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, and when he suffered, threatened not. If a disposition thus placid, and ever endearing him to his friends, be truly calculated, as we know it is, to soothe the griefs, to alleviate the misfortunes, and to heighten the joys of humanity, he whose loss we now lament, must often have tasted its pure delights; and, by his example, correcting, counselling, and encouraging us in the performance of every duty, must be regarded as an ornament and blessing to the circle in which he moved.

A sacred character, thus approved by its practical usefulness, could not fail to attract the esteem of those over whom it was appointed in the Lord, and for whose moral and spiritual benefit it incessantly laboured. Who among us does not reflect, with a pleasing melancholy, on the glowing strains with which, in prayer, he poured forth the aspirations of a pious heart, for mercy and

grace to human infirmity—and on the earnest counsels and exhortations which he drew, in the Spirit of God, from the divine sources of faith and hope in Christ Jesus? And can we think on the substance and language of the discourses to which we listened, without a high degree of respect for the talents they displayed, and a feeling of gratitude for the improvement they ministered, under grace, to all our religious and moral affections? Truly, my friends, he thus approved himself a workman that needed not to be ashamed in rightly dividing the Word of Truth. For such was the character and effect of all his sentiments on every subject of religion and morals. Unwarped by any sinister bias, and dictated solely by a deep impression of their truth, they were maintained and defended by him with an independent and fearless energy; and, on delivering them, he possessed a peculiar felicity of rich flowing and varied expression.

Let us consider all the valuable instructions to which we listened under the ministry of our departed friend, as a precious talent committed to our trust, for which we must finally be brought to account. Christians! let the world see that such advantages have not been bestowed on you in vain; that you profit diligently by what he taught; and that you are truly followers of him who, by faith and patience, is now, we believe, inheriting the promises. This is a tribute of respect to his memory, more honourable to him, and more profitable to you, than all the expression of a vain regret. By this testimony, you will adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour; you will draw men to the service of God, and you will finally save your own souls. It is, indeed, impossible that the remembrance of so much worth should not be long cherished with tenderness, and lamented with sincerity. But while we mourn over departed excellence, let us consider that all the afflictions and bereavements, mingled with our lot, are appointed by God in wisdom and mercy for our benefit. Let us exclaim, “It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good!”

Besides the tribute paid to his memory in his ministerial capacity, it is to be noticed, that he was not less successful in another important official station. His University prelections manifested not only depth of thought and extensive erudition, but such a measure of refined taste and useful instruction as were powerfully adapted to promote the intellectual and moral improvement of his pupils.

In the course of his life, Dr. Brown was occasionally visited with domestic affliction. Under this, he evinced the patience and resignation of a true Christian. With regard to external circumstances, he might be considered as on the whole uniformly prosperous. It was only towards the close of life that an event occurred which wrung his heart with many a pang, and was the occasion of my now addressing this assembly in a place of worship,* which, however comfortable, is not a church. My worthy colleague felt a peculiar anxiety about maintaining the rights and privileges of the Old church,† in which he officiated for a period of more than thirty-three years. It sorely, therefore, vexed his righteous spirit when, by an arbitrary and incompetent exertion of power, after the repairs of the ancient Cathedral of St. Giles's had been completed, we, the ministers, were excluded from the possession of our parish church, into which the pastor and people of another church and parish were intruded, in violation of every law of ecclesiastical procedure.

The individual ‡ thus substituted in our place, is a man of the highest professional excellence; there is not, perhaps, in the whole Church a clergyman more zealous and faithful in the discharge of all his parochial duties. But it was a demand on our ecclesiastical patriotism far too great, that we should voluntarily surrender what we knew to be our vested rights and privileges, in favour of any one, however meritorious, without being deprived by a competent power, and without the authority of our ecclesiastical superiors interposed, according to the laws and practice of the Church. To say that this proceeding, not less cruel than unjust and illegal, was in any degree the cause of bringing down the grey hairs of him, who is now no more amongst the living, with sorrow to the grave, would be perhaps exceeding the truth. Yet surely, Christians, it is much to be regretted, that the feelings of a mind, conscious of its high powers and attainments, and acutely alive to a sense of injustice alike gratuitous and unprovoked, should have been so deeply wounded by a deprivation, of which the avowed reason was, that we were old and unfashionable preachers, and which thus affixed to us a public and official stigma of inability in our

professional capacity, although both of us were then as capable of discharging our duty as at any former period of life. By that inevitable stroke of death, which sooner or later awaits us all, he, for whom our tears of sorrow have been shed, is now taken from the evil to come, and exalted to that region where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. *I remain to struggle alone* against the powers that be, meditating hard and vexatious things against the Church, and without the prospect of obtaining admission into that repaired and beautified edifice, into which he, who is gone, had long anxiously indulged the hope of meeting his beloved congregation, ere he descended to the grave. The only hope we have now to cherish is, that, through the power of the great Redeemer, the departed and we shall all in the end meet together in those eternal mansions of the blessed in glory, which are reserved for the people of God.

My stated hearers well know, and if there are strangers in this audience, I have to assure them, that I am not in the habit of introducing such topics of secular interest into the pulpit. But, on this occasion, of bidding, as it were, a long and lasting adieu to one of the best of friends, and most valuable of men, it was impossible to avoid alluding to what I know pierced to the quick, a heart of unusual sensibility during the few last years of a long and comparatively happy life.

In conclusion, leaving this ungrateful topic, it is natural to consider the seasonable counsel impressed on the mind by an occasion, solemn and mournful, like the present. What instance of mortality could, with equal effect, teach us the wisdom of eternity as that of a pastor, of whose affectionate ministration the hand of death hath bereft us for ever! His eye shall no longer witness the expressions of that respect in which he was held; his ear cannot now be open to the blessings poured on his memory. Still it was our duty, and this day we have endeavoured to discharge it, to recall for our instruction in righteousness, and our imitation, the leading features of his life, and conversation in the living world, formed on the basis of christian principle, and maintained in simplicity and godly sincerity. In his case, it may be said, with great truth, that, in the language of the Psalmist, "We beheld the upright man, and saw that the latter end of that man is peace." And we are attracted by a pleasing example to order our lives after the pattern of pious men, so as to die, like those who have

* The Rector's Class-Room in the High School, Calton Hill.

† Now West St. Giles.

‡ The Rev. Mr. Marshall.

fallen asleep in Jesus. "I heard," says John, "a voice from heaven, saying, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; they rest, saith the Spirit, from their labours, and their works do follow them." How did a prospect so delightful support the Apostle, when he said, "I have fought the good fight; I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me

at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing!" It is only the upright man that can say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou Lord art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Amen.

Dr. Brown, who died on the 19th of February, was a native of Biggar, in Lanarkshire, and commenced his academical education at Glasgow, which he completed at Edinburgh. His talents were known and appreciated by the late Principal Robertson and Dr. Blair, who recommended him to be minister of the Scottish Church at Halifax, in Nova Scotia; and it was in this situation that he designed writing a history of the British Settlements in North America. To this great undertaking he bent the whole force of his mind for many years. It was never published; but much of it being in a finished state, and, as we understand, possessed of very high merits, it is hoped it may yet be given to the public. After remaining seven or eight years at Halifax, he received a presentation to the church and parish of Lochmaben, in Dumfries-shire. Soon after, he was removed to the New Greyfriar's Church, in Edinburgh, and promoted, after the death of the Rev. Dr. James Macknight, to the Old Church in the same city. During the recent repairs of the Cathedral of St. Giles', of which the Old Church has, since the Reformation, formed a part, Dr. Brown, with his colleague, Dr. Macknight, were removed to the High School, Calton Hill; but Dr. Brown was never after permitted to take his place in his former parish Church—the late Lord Provost having, as many think, without sufficient reason, fixed the Rev. Mr. Marshall in that part of this repaired and beautified edifice, which now goes by the name of West St. Giles' Church.

THE MUTABILITY OF MAN, CONTRASTED WITH THE STABILITY OF THE WORD OF GOD;

A SERMON PREACHED IN CAMBRIDGE STREET, GLASGOW, ON THE AFTERNOON OF
SABBATH, 5th JANUARY, 1831,

By the Rev. WILLIAM MACLURE,

"The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever."—ISAIAH xl. 6, 8.

IN these verses there are obviously two things brought before us, and placed in strong and impressive contrast with each other—the fleeting nature of the life of man, and the eternal stability of the Word of God: "All flesh is grass; but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

The first is a truth which experience demonstrates, and of which revelation unfolds to us the cause; while the other has been communicated to us directly from heaven, and has been so confirmed by the past history of the world, that, independently of the immovable ground on which it rests—the faithfulness of a God that cannot lie—we might reason as to its unchangeableness in every period that is yet to come.

The one refers to the frailty which is in-

cident to our nature, and to the decay and dissolution to which it leads—reminding us, in all the peculiarities of this condition, of the change that has passed upon our race since we came originally from the hand of a perfect Creator, and of the evil and bitter thing which, in the shape of sin committed against infinite holiness, has entailed and transmitted it to all future generations. The other carries us at once from the mutability of man to the unchangeableness of God; and, in the truth and duration of his Word, taken in connexion with our own frail and feverish existence, offers to us both warning and encouragement in the prosecution of the great ends for which we have been created.

It may be remarked how closely these two truths are linked together. There is no

separation of them, as if the nature of man could be disjoined from the declarations of God's Word. They are placed beside each other in such a way, as to express that the relation which they mutually bear, is of the most intimate kind; and that the frail being which we now possess, is alike solved as to its present condition, and will be determined as to its future, by the disclosures and decisions of that Word which has been sent to us from heaven, and which standeth for ever fast, being established in "truth that cannot lie, and righteousness that cannot err."

We observe the close connexion which subsists between these truths, because there is a tendency in the unrenewed mind to disunite them—a disrelish to the solemn intimations of religion, and a practical bias to fill up the short time which is allotted to us here, in pursuits which have no reference whatever to the great interests of an eternal world. Why not make the most of this life, it is often said, seeing it is a thing which passes so quickly away? To-day we are, and to-morrow we are not. The present at least is ours. We are in the land of living men; and since pleasure invites, and earthly interests engage, and this world's hopes are so bright and alluring, why not grasp the moment as it flies, and give it to the temporal purposes for which this body seems to have been intended? Such is the language of those whom the god of this world has blinded, and led captive at his will. It is what the Apostle styles, "using this world," but at the same time "abusing" it, giving to it the powers both of body and of mind, which should have been devoted to higher ends—which, being formed by the hand of God, and created after his image, should have been consecrated entirely and unreservedly to his will—refusing or neglecting altogether to look into the glass of his revealed Word; or if looking into it for a moment, going afterwards away, and straightway forgetting what manner of persons they were, for what ends they were designed, and to what destination they are approaching. Here, however, and indeed in almost every page of this inspired volume, the nature of the condition which we now hold, and the frailty of our present frame, are brought into immediate connexion with the declarations of God's Word; so that if we wish to draw to a right purpose those lessons of practical wisdom which every thing connected with

this world—its hopes and fears, its grief and joy—its prosperity and adversity—its change and fluctuation, should lead us to deduce; if we are desirous to redeem the time, and make the discipline of this fleeting state subservient to the interests of a higher and a better, we must bind up every view we take of it by a reference to that heavenly Word, through which along its seeming irregularities are explained, and through which we know so distinctly of a time when they will still farther be illustrated in the light of divine wisdom and justice and truth. It is a false inference, therefore, nay, it is pernicious and destructive, to consider that if life be short, it ought to be devoted the more strenuously to the world. If no revelation had been vouchsafed to us, or if, in the defect of that, our consciences had told us that death was an eternal sleep—a state from which there was no awaking to meet an omniscient Judge, and to render a solemn and minute account—then might the inference be just, and the world, so far from being abjured in any respect, might be lived to as our portion and our home. But the Word of God has been given to us, and that Word our consciences approve of, for it speaks only the more clearly what has been originally inscribed upon the heart, and it tells us that this world is not our home—that it may be the home of our pilgrimage, but that it is not a permanent, a continuing city—that the fashion of it soon passeth away, and that, considering it is only the brief preparation to an existence that shall never end, it is a matter of the most transcendent importance that its corrupt desires should be mortified, and its sinful practices abandoned, and so a meetness be obtained for the pure and untiring employments of that heavenly land, in which no unrighteousness can dwell.

This, then, is one view which our text presents from the contrast and connexion which it holds out between the Word of God and the frail being which we now possess. But there is another point which it brings before us in the solemn language with which it is introduced. The truth that we are frail and fleeting in our nature, is a most important truth—as important, perhaps, as any that can possibly affect us, and yet how often is it overlooked! how slight is the impression which it too generally makes upon the heart! "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry?" Here a

is made, which announces the importance and solemnity of the truths to be declared.

The Almighty is exhibited as calling upon his servant, the Prophet, to take heed to the message which he was about to deliver, and to proclaim it as that which had come expressly from the lips of Jehovah, and as that to which the attention of men was earnestly and solemnly to be directed. And yet it may perhaps be said by some, Why introduce in so imposing a manner a truth so well understood as the frailty and fleeting nature of man's existence? Why call upon the Prophet, by an authoritative voice from heaven, to publish a thing so universally known, as if, till then, it had been hid from the minds of men? Why give to so common and recognized a truth an air of such peculiar solemnity?

It is the very commonness of it, my friends, which shows the indispensable necessity of its thus being presented to our notice. It is this which proves that it should be loudly proclaimed and accompanied with every circumstance that can add to its force and impression. Being common, it affects the less. The mind is familiar with it. It is a matter of daily observation, and thus it is regarded as a thing, the truth of which cannot possibly be disputed; but the power of which, all solemn and important as it is, is weak and unimpressive, in proportion to its commonness and familiarity.

Take the case as it affects ourselves. How often do we see the memorials of death passing along our crowded streets. The mourners go along, and we know that disease, and pain, and death, and sorrow, must have been there; and, if we take a moment to reflect, we know likewise that sooner or later these things will be to us and to our friends. But say what practical impression has this spectacle left behind it? Has it carried us into the "chambers of imagery," and there led us to bethink ourselves of the change that must soon await us? Has it brought before us, with the realizing convictions which it ought, the solemn thoughts of death, and judgment, and eternity, and thus taught us so to "number our days as to apply our hearts unto wisdom?" On the contrary, have we not many a time and oft turned a heedless and momentary glance upon such a sight as it moved along, and, straightway in the engrossing cares or pleasures of the world, forgot that it had ever passed before us, or that it might be the will of Providence that, in a short time hence, the place that knows ourselves, might henceforth know us no more for ever?

Does not day unto day utter speech, and night unto night teach knowledge, of deaths, and afflictions, and bereavements, on every side of us? We hear of them, and perhaps not with absolute indifference. We are at times moved with them. Their suddenness, or the peculiar circumstances attending them, have affected our hearts, and we weep, it may be for a moment, or stand aghast at the darkness of the dispensation. But where, it may be asked, is the result? Does it appear in the thoughts, and life, and conversation? Has it taken away one particle of our attachment from the world, or constrained us to think more closely of God, and judgment, and eternity? Nay, the calamity may have perhaps reached ourselves. The destroying angel may have passed over the house of our pilgrimage, and bereft it of some of the hopes and ornaments that belonged to it, and the heart may have sunk and mourned for a while over the loss which it had sustained and the desolation which it felt; but still, it may be asked, where is the result? The warning has been given; but where is the impression—the practical impression which it was designed to make? It is not seen in all the life; and yet it was intended to "humble and to prove" us. The trial was sent—the recurring spectacle of mortality is presented, that the remembrance of our own frailty and coming decease may be brought before us; and that, in the deep conviction of what this great event will disclose to our view, we may be led, etc. if it be too late, to the rock that is higher still than we, and place there the hope and the security of our souls, till every calamity be overpast. But how often has the trial been sent, and the drooping form and the passing funeral been seen in vain! The world still encircles us with its toils; and the thought of death, as it affects ourselves, is either shifted from the mind, or placed at an immeasurable distance before us. And, above all, we have not called upon God with one expression of the earnestness with which he has called upon us. If we had done so, the result would have been different. The heart would have been melted, and God honoured, and the power of a future world been more impressively felt. But the truth is, that we do not consider, as we ought, the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart. We reflect not on the heavenly strength that is necessary to turn it; and thus, neglecting or refusing to seek unto Him who alone can convert warnings and trials into blessings, we continue the very men we were—the

witnesses of grief, and perhaps the of it, surrounded by the desolate, the dying, and the dead, and yet unmoved by vicissitude, unsoftened by trial, unchanged in spirit, uncrucified to the world; and since, then, all this heedlessness and obduracy are felt in the view of scenes, so frequently recurring, of the frailty and mortality of man, oh! how needful is the urgency of our text, and how appropriate the solemnity which represents the Lord himself as calling upon his Prophet to cry out—to proclaim truths which, however known and recognized, are so seldom appreciated and felt.

The language of our text is peculiarly expressive of the short and uncertain nature of this life, and of the universality of that frailty and decay which attach to it: "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field." Such has been the experience of man in every age and country of the world. At the end of the longest life, he feels that his existence has flitted past as a shadow—that the days of his years have been only as a tale that is told.

To prove, therefore, a point which is so thoroughly acknowledged, because so universally felt, would be quite unnecessary. The deep regret and the desolation of spirit which most of us may have felt in the separation by death from friends and relatives whom we have loved, and, at the same time, the remembrance of many known to us, if not connected by the ties of friendship or of blood, who have been cut off in the beauty and vigour of their days—all speak of the truth and propriety of the prophet's similitude, that "all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field." The grass springs up, at first in the tender blade, then in the stronger and maturer stalk; but soon it is trodden under foot, or withered in the noon tide beam. And then the flower: how lovely in its tints, how rapid in its progress! How quickly, if no accident intervenes, does it reach its expanded fulness, exist in the perfection of its beauty, is cut down perhaps in the glowing excellence of its being; or if it escape the rude hand of violence, is seen within a few short hours to fade, and languish, and wither away! Such, too, is the life of man. "He cometh forth as a flower." As the fairest and most excellent of all created works he is introduced into the world. His body is fearfully and wonderfully made. His soul is the seat of thought, and will, and intelligence, and feeling. He is endowed with powers which assimilate him to the

divine image, capable at once of glorifying his Creator, and receiving from him the fulness of a pure and exalted happiness. Thus is he beautiful as the flower of the field—surpassing all the tribes of the animal creation, even as the flower surpasseth all the tribes of vegetation. Like it, if no breath of infection or destructive influence of the many dangers to which he is exposed, cut him off in the bud and tenderness of his youthful years—like it he soon reaches the maturity of his being. The stages of his progress, and the period of his duration may be somewhat longer, but still the analogy is strikingly correct. He soon arrives at the full strength and beauty of his present existence, and then advances with a sure and rapid movement to that time when independently of accident or untimely circumstance, he must go the way of all living, and sink into corruption, even as a flower that has withered into dust.

But the analogy holds good in various respects. We cannot trace with the eye the springing, and progress, and decay of the flower. If uninjured, it passes through its several stages, and these we can discern when they have taken effect upon it, but we cannot mark the imperceptible gliding with which it moves into these separate states. They occur, but we cannot perceive them. And so is it with the life of man. If unarrested by the hand of death, infancy glides into youth, youth into manhood, and manhood into age; and so silent and unperceived are these respective changes, that we know not how they have come, and scarcely think of them at all, till they are forced as it were upon our notice. Days and years thus pass away, and we seldom stop to remark their flight. Deluded by the gentle gliding away of existence, or, if its smoothness be broken with the blasts that so frequently sweep across it, engrossed only with the storm from whose effects we are suffering, we forget to number our days; and hence the urgent necessity of being reminded, and reminded solemnly, that time is moving with a steady step, and that it will bring us, ere long, to the period when with us it will be converted into the realities of eternity. And when viewed in the light of eternity, may we not regard the life of man but as the "grass that withereth," and the "flower that fadeth." A handbreadth, a span, a shadow that fleeth, a tale that is told, are some of the terms by which Scripture describes it; and well may the three-score years and ten, which form for the most part the longest allotted term of hu-

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man existence, be represented as such, when brought into comparison with that eternity of years which stretches beyond the grave—the immeasurable extent of which no finite mind has powers adequate to conceive.

And yet even the threescore years and ten, short as they are, may not be given us to arrive at. The intermediate space is beset with dangers, the least of which may stretch us on a bed of sickness and of death, or in a moment loose the “silver cord” that binds us to existence. The infant, amidst all its innocence and beauty, may be cut off by the hand of death like a bud untimely nipped. The youth, amidst the promise of his days, and the hopes of parents and of friends, may be laid in the dust by accident or disease, even as an opening flower that has been crushed. And so may it be with every stage of life. Man wasteth away, and where is he? He goeth down into the dust, and the mourners frequent our streets. All is change and fluctuation; and seeing this is the case, what we ask, is the language which every vicissitude proclaims—the life—the death that is around us—the sudden change from time to eternity—the sickening frame—the bed of languishing—the rigid corpse—the opened grave—the habiliments of grief, what is the voice which one and all they utter to every human heart? Is it not that time is on the wing—that death is appointed unto all; and, therefore, that it behoves us to be ready, for, at such a time as we know not, the Son of man cometh?

My friends, it is even an affecting consideration that the works of our own hands shall survive us. The building which we may chance to rear, is far more durable than ourselves. It will stand in almost undiminished strength, when this frail body has mouldered into dust. But even it too will, in the lapse of time, fall and crumble into its original elements. It will pass away as if it had never been; yet still the workmanship of the Eternal stands. His seas, and rocks, and hills, shall still remain to testify that he is a God of wisdom and of power. Circling ages may revolve, and still they may continue; but the time shall yet come, predicted by the Lord, when even these masses of Almighty strength shall bow; when the heavens and the earth shall depart, yea, be wrapt up as a scroll, and when the elements shall dissolve with fervent heat. But the life of man—so frail and fleeting when viewed even in connexion with the works around him—that life may pass away, and be as the flower that wither-

eth; yea, even the works which he has erected, and above all, the perpetual hills of Jehovah himself—perpetual when viewed in contrast with the brief term of human existence, even these shall be broken up, and shall disappear, but “the Word of our God shall stand for ever.”

Here, then, we have a ground to rest upon, amidst all the changes and fluctuations of this present world—a ground of eternal strength and immutability, because laid upon the “rock of ages;” that foundation, “elect and precious,” which no time can possibly affect, and against which even the gates of hell shall not be able to prevail. And from whom does this Word proceed? Does it not come from Him, who in the volume of the Book is described as the Word himself; who, in eternity, dwelt with the Father; who planned with him in that eternity the great scheme of human redemption; who laid by his power the foundations of the earth; who breathed into man the breath of life; whose, therefore, we are, and whom we are bound to serve; whom man dishonoured by disobedience, but who, unwilling that he should perish, began to put into operation the purposes of his devised and mighty scheme; who, in times past, spake unto our Fathers by the prophets, and exhibited his power, and announced his will, until at length, in the fulness of time, the day-star brightened into the Sun of righteousness, and he himself, made manifest in the flesh, was seen of men, and testified his glory—the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth?

This is the source of that Word which, unchanged by time and unmoved by all the vicissitudes of earth, it is declared “shall stand for ever.” He himself is the Word—he who became flesh and dwelt among us. Perfect in his nature, he is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” No change can affect him, for a thousand years are in his sight as yesterday when it is past; and amidst all the variations of the human heart, *He* is subject to not one movement of harshness or caprice, but on the throne of heaven where he sits, is touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and is ready not only to relieve us, but to extend to us the very richest blessings connected with his mediatorial purchase. This is the rock of ages to which we are called on to repair, forsaking “refuges of lies,” which the lapse of years shall sweep away, or the “storm” and “hail” of tribulation shall beat in pieces; and seeking this as the only foundation, sure and

steadfast, on which we can build for time and eternity, and knowing, on the ground of faithfulness "that cannot lie," that if we so build in the exercise of faith that the mountains and the hills may be removed, but that our hope and confidence shall never be shaken or put to shame.

But not only is he the Word himself—the Omnipotent, everlasting Word, but he has given to us in his Word a revelation of his will, and just as he, all perfect in his nature, is without one symptom of "variableness," one "shadow of turning," so is the Word which he has proclaimed unaltered and unalterable: the heavens may pass away, but not one jot or tittle of it shall pass until all be fulfilled.

It is impossible within so limited a space as we now have, to speak of the manifold aspects in which it might be shown that this Word shall stand for ever; but we may at least advert to two, distinguished as they are, for a peculiar prominence in God's unchangeable Word, and affecting as they inevitably will do the interests of our souls for time and for eternity.

It shall stand in reference to its denunciations against sin. "The soul that sinneth it shall die," was the language of that sentence which the original covenant between God and man contained, and still the terms of that sentence remain uncancelled. Sin *did* enter into the world, and straightway death was introduced with all its horrors. The Word of the Lord behoved to stand, and the threatened sentence to be executed, and to the very letter it was so, though, in the execution of it, the Word of God was magnified above all his name. The Lord of glory condescended to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. On him was laid the iniquity of us all. He died the death—the spiritual, the eternal death which we should have suffered; and thus he nailed the penalty to his cross, and purchased life and glory for all that would believe in his name. But still to the impenitent and unbelieving, the punishment is not remitted. Nor has it altogether been removed from any one so far as this life is concerned. Frailty and disease are now incident to our natures, and temporal death will take effect on all; and what, then, is the lesson which all this is designed to inculcate? Is it not simply this, that when sorrow, and sickness, and suffering, and death are seen, we might

be reminded that sin is in the world, and with one part of the infliction before our eyes, might rest in the declarations of that Word which tells us that, if the Saviour be rejected, the second death shall pass upon our souls when judgment and justice shall be manifested, and mercy shall be clean gone for ever.

But there is a way of escape, and in fleeing to it, the mercy which the Word reveals shall likewise "stand for ever." This is another aspect in which its truth and unchangeableness shall be seen. The first covenant whose tenor was, "do this and live," and which, consequently, rested in obedience, was broken; and now another covenant has been formed, the express ground of which is faith. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Faith is required to be exercised in the Word, which Word reveals in the very clearest terms, the dignity and sufficiency of that great atonement which has been rendered for sin; and now we have only to show forth this trust in the Saviour, and those fruits of obedience in the life which, if genuine, it will never fail to produce, and on the pledge of "divine faithfulness and truth," we may rest assured that salvation shall be ours—that peace shall be given to us here, and everlasting glory and blessedness hereafter.

Brethren, what think ye of these things? Another year is numbered with the past, and a new one has commenced its brief revolution. The bodies we possess are frail and fleeting. Their nature is like the grass, their comeliness like the flower of the field. The year that has fled has shown, in innumerable instances, the uncertainty of life, and the certainty of death; and ere the one which has now begun may have terminated its rapid course, these bodies which we wear may have returned to the dust from whence they came, and the spirit unto God that gave it. And what, then, in these circumstances, is the language of our text? Is it not to one and all, be sober, be vigilant, be mindful of death, of judgment, of eternity; be not faithless but believing; rest on the Word, have trust in God, yea, even in the mighty God of Jacob; and, looking to the glory to be revealed, have your loins girded about, and your lamps burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for the coming of their Lord?

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THE
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SATURDAY, 5TH APRIL, 1834.

No. 106.

SERMON by the Rev. ADAM GUN, A.M., Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. RICHARD MARTIN, A.B., Greenock.

Price 2d.

THE DUTY OF EARLY SEEKING CHRIST;

A SERMON PREACHED IN HOPE STREET CHAPEL, ON THE EVENING OF SABBATH 19th
JANUARY, 1834, TO THE CHILDREN UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF THE
COWCADDENS SABBATH SCHOOL SOCIETY,

By the Rev. ADAM GUN, A.M.,
Minister of Hope Street Chapel.

“Early will I seek thee.”—Ps. lxiii. 1.

You know, little children, who spake these words. It was David, the king of Israel. Though he was a great king, and had many things to occupy his attention, he yet considered God to be the chief object of his desire. He could not be happy without God. But you know the Lord is a great God, and to be feared and had in reverence of all that draw near unto him; and, therefore, you must seek God through the Lord Jesus Christ. When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he pointed him out to his disciples as the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” John i. 29, 36. And when his disciples heard this, they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him, and said unto them, v. 38, “What seek ye?” Now, David and John’s disciples were seeking the same thing; for sinners, as we are, cannot approach the glorious presence of Jehovah, but as he is revealed in the Saviour.

Some of you little children may be inclined to ask,

I. *Why you should seek Christ?*

You know that the Lord Jesus Christ is a very glorious Being. He is adorned with all the perfections of God. He is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. He is the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person. He is called in Scripture “the pearl of great price”—that is, nothing is so valuable in heaven or earth, as to be compared with

Jesus. He is God’s “unspeakable gift,” and men or angels cannot rehearse his excellencies. He is “the day-star from on high, and the Sun of righteousness,” from whom proceed light and warmth, and every comfort and blessing.

And what are some of those blessings which God is ready to bestow on those who seek Christ?

1. The pardon of sin.

Every one of us, young and old, needs to have his iniquities blotted out. The Word of God informs us that we are born in *sin*, and brought forth in iniquity; we are the children of wrath, and liable to destruction. You know that when God destroyed the people of the old world, because their wickedness was great on the face of the earth, little children like you were drowned, along with their parents and friends; and this shows us that little children are sinners as well as others; for God, who is a just God, would not punish them if they were not guilty. And if you think on your own hearts, and consider your own conduct, do you not feel that you do many things which are wrong? Have you not been thinking your own thoughts, and speaking your own words, and doing your own works, on this holy Sabbath? This is *sin*, and you need to be forgiven your *iniquity*. How much should you and I desire to obtain the happiness of which David speaks in the 2nd psalm! “Blessed is he whose transgression

is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile."

We can do nothing for ourselves. I will tell you a story about the Rev. David Dickson, a good minister, that was once in Edinburgh. Being asked, when on his death-bed, how he found himself, he answered, "I have taken my good deeds and bad deeds, and thrown them together in a heap, and fled from them both to Christ, and in him I have peace." He felt that he could do nothing for himself. When he inquired, like the prophet Micah, (vi. 6, 7,) "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" He found that none of these things could be of any avail. "There is no name given under heaven among men, by which we can be saved, but the name of Christ." I read lately of a certain man on the Malabar coast, who had inquired of various devotees and priests, how he might make atonement for his sins; and he was directed to drive iron spikes, sufficiently blunted, through his sandals, and on these spikes he was directed to place his naked feet, and to walk about 480 miles. If, through loss of blood, or weakness of body, he was obliged to halt, he might wait for healing and strength. He undertook the journey, (for what will not a person awakened to a sense of sin attempt, to get rid of the burden of it,) and while he halted under a large shady tree, where the Gospel was sometimes preached, one of the missionaries came and preached in his hearing, from these words: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." While he was preaching, the man rose up, threw off his torturing sandals, and cried out aloud, "this is what I want," and he became a lively witness, that the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin. And, little children, what peace, and comfort, and hope, and joy, does it produce in the mind, even in the most distressing circumstances! I have read about a dying soldier and a dying officer. The soldier was wounded at the battle of Waterloo, and carried by his companion to some distance, and laid down at the foot of a tree, where his companion, at his request, read to him a few verses of the Bible, upon which he said, "I die happy, for I possess the peace of God, which pass-

eth all understanding." A little while after, one of the officers passed him, and seeing him in a very exhausted state, asked him how he did. He answered him as he said formerly to his companion, and then expired. The officer was soon after mortally wounded, and when surrounded by his brother officers, full of anguish and dismay, he cried out, "Oh! I would give ten thousand worlds that I possessed that peace which gladdened the heart of the dying soldier whom I saw lying under the tree. I know nothing of this peace! I die miserable! for I die in despair!"

Now, little children, you must seek Jesus, that you may have your sins forgiven, and that you may live at peace with God, and die in safety and in happiness.

2. Another blessing which Christ gives, and for which you should seek him, is *holiness*.

You know, little children, that God is "glorious in holiness," and that he says to each of us, "O do not that abominable thing which my soul hateth!" We are in his sight "altogether as an unclean thing." Our hearts are full of malice, and pride, and impurity. We require that God would create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us. Now, Christ cleanseth the souls of those that come to the fountain which has been opened for sin and uncleanness; and his Holy Spirit is sent to sanctify the soul. The people of God who, like the Corinthians, have been "washed, and justified, and sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God," are able to sing "unto Him that loved us, and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood." When a person is brought, like the apostle Paul, to glory in nothing but in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, the world is thereby crucified unto him, and he is crucified unto the world. I will tell you a story on this subject. Mr. Marshall, author of the "Gospel Mystery of Sanctification," having been for several years under distress of mind, consulted Dr. Goodwin, an eminent divine, giving him an account of the state of his soul, and particularizing his sins, which lay heavy on his conscience. In reply, he told him he had forgot to mention the greatest sin of all—the sin of unbelief, in not believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, for the remission of his sins, and for sanctifying his nature. On this, he set himself to the studying and preaching Christ, and attained to eminent holiness, great peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

If you, little children, wish to be made

holy, as God is holy, that God may have pleasure in seeing you, as olive plants trained up beside the water courses, you must seek Christ, and wait on him for his Spirit, to sprinkle you with his peace-speaking and purifying blood. You have great need of being made holy, and it is a difficult thing to make you holy. You know it is a difficult thing to break the hard flinty rock. Now, your hearts are compared, in Scripture, to the adamant and to the nether millstone ; and the more holy you become, the more you will feel your want of holiness. I will tell you what Mr. Newton, an excellent minister, once said when reading the text : "By the grace of God, I am what I am." He said, I am not what I *ought* to be. Ah! how imperfect and deficient ! I am not what I *wish* to be ; but I abhor what is evil, and would cleave to that which is good ! I am not what I *hope* to be ; soon, soon I shall put off mortality, and with it all sin and imperfection. Yet, though I am not what I *ought* to be, nor what I *wish* to be, nor what I *hope* to be, I can truly say, I am not what I once was—a slave to sin and Satan ; and I can heartily join with the Apostle and acknowledge, "By the grace of God, I am what I am!"

8. The only other blessing which I shall now mention, that you shall get by seeking Christ, is, *eternal life* in heaven.

It is said, in one of the psalms, "The Lord is a sun and shield ; he will give grace and glory." He gives grace here, in forgiving the sins of those who seek him, and, by the power of his grace, he subdues sin in the soul ; and he will give glory hereafter, in bringing every one of those, whom he pardons and purifies, to heaven, to be ever in the presence and enjoying the favour of God. He is saying to you now, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing ; and I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." You know that Moses, though adopted into the family of Pharaoh's daughter, and exalted to the honours of Pharaoh's kingdom, preferred joining himself to the Lord's people, and to suffer affliction with them, than to enjoy all the treasures of Egypt, and all the pleasures of sin for a season, that he might have the dignity of being numbered among the children of God ; and we read that he did so, because "he had respect to the recompence of reward."

You know, little children, that there are only two places beyond the grave, to one or other of which we must all go. When Christ was on the cross, there were two

thieves crucified, one on either side of him ; one of them repented of his sins, and applied for help to Christ, saying, "Lord, remember me when thou comest to thy kingdom," and the Lord answered him graciously : "This night shalt thou be with me in paradise." Had not he felt his sin, and applied to Christ, and obtained mercy, what would have become of him ? He would have shared the fate of the impenitent thief, in being abandoned to destruction ; as soon as death arrived, he, like the rich man of whom we read, would "lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment," instead of being, like Lazarus, carried to Abraham's bosom by the angels of God.

Little children, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. God is a consuming fire to all who do not seek him in Christ Jesus. The wrath of God abideth on each of us, unless freed from it by Christ. You can know somewhat of the dreadful effects of God's curse. You remember that once Christ, when hungry, passed by a fig-tree, upon which there was no fruit, and Christ cursed the tree, and it withered away. How terrible if the wrath of Christ should fall on us ! You have heard that the devils in hell were once angels in heaven ; but, as soon as they sinned against God, his wrath was poured upon them. And, oh ! what a change took place on them ! They were cast into that lake of fire and brimstone, which was then prepared for the devil and his angels, and the wicked people who will not seek Christ to "deliver them from the wrath to come." "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.

Christ Jesus." A little boy, on his death-bed, was asked where he was going ? He answered, to heaven. Being farther asked why he wished to go there ? he answered, because Christ is there. And being again asked what he would do if Christ should leave heaven ? He replied, I will go with him whithersoever he goeth.

These, my young friends, are gifts worth the seeking, and I hope some of you have been excited to inquire,

II. *How* you are to seek Christ, so as to find him.

1. You must *believe* in Christ : "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

Some of you know the questions of the Shorter Catechism. "What is faith in Jesus Christ ? Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the Gospel." You must believe all that is said in the Scriptures about Christ, who is "able to save them to the uttermost,

who come unto God by him." You must feel your need of Christ, and believe in him to the saving of your souls. I will tell you a very pretty story from which you may learn the nature of faith. "Children," says Cecil, "are capable of very early impressions. I imprinted on my daughter the idea of faith, at a very early age. She was playing one day with a few beads, which seemed wonderfully to delight her. Her whole soul was absorbed in her beads. I said, 'my dear, you have some pretty beads there.' 'Yes, papa.' 'And you seem vastly pleased with them. Well, now, throw them behind the fire.' The tears started into her eyes; she looked earnestly at me, as if she ought to have a reason for so cruel a sacrifice. 'Well, my dear, do as you please: but you know, I never told you to do any thing, which I did not think would be for your good;' she looked at me a few moments longer, and then summoning up all her fortitude, her breast heaving with the effort, she dashed them into the fire. 'Well,' said I, 'there let them lie; you shall hear more about them another time; but, I say, no more of them now.' Some days after, I bought her a boxful of larger beads, and toys of the same kind. When I returned home, I opened the treasure, and set it before her; she burst into tears with excessive joy. 'These, my child,' said I, 'are yours, because you believed me when I told you to throw these paltry beads behind the fire; your obedience has brought you this treasure. But now, my dear, remember as long as you live, what *faith* is. I did all this to teach you the meaning of faith. You threw your beads away when I bade you, because you had faith in me, that I never advised you but for your good. Put the same trust in God; believe every thing that he says in his word. Whether you understand it or not, have faith in him that he means your good.'"

Now, little children, remember what faith is, and put it in practice, for without faith you cannot be interested in Christ, or have any of the blessings which are treasured up in him.

2. In seeking Christ you must pray to him.

Although God knows what we require, yet that does not supersede the necessity of our imploring the blessing needed by us. God knew what Solomon needed; but he said to him, "Ask what I shall give thee." When the blind beggar, Bartimeus, heard Christ passing by, and he cried, saying, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me," Christ knew well what he needed, and what

he wished; yet he put to him the question: "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee." Again, when the children of Israel were in the land of their captivity, God determined that at the end of seventy years they should be restored to their own country; but he said, "yet for all these things I will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it unto them."

Probably some of you, little children, and some persons who are grown up, may be saying that they cannot pray. This will be no excuse, for God has promised to instruct those who wish to be taught to pray, just as Christ taught his disciples to pray in those interesting words which I hope you all know, and which have been appropriately called the Lord's prayer. "Our Father which art in heaven," &c., as you will find them recorded in the sixth chapter of Matthew, at the 9th verse. You can easily remember such a prayer as that offered up by the thief on the cross: "Lord remember me when thou comest to thy kingdom;" or that of Bartimeus: "Jesus thou Son of David, have mercy on me;" or the prayer of the publican, when he went up with the Pharisee to the temple to pray: "God be merciful to me a sinner." I remember a story about a Hottentot who was under deep convictions of sin, and who did not know how to pray, being present at family worship at his master's house, was taught how to pray, by hearing the parable of the Pharisee and the publican read. While the prayer of the Pharisee was read, the poor Hottentot thought within himself, "This is a *good* man; here is nothing for me," but when the master came to the prayer of the publican—"God be merciful to me a sinner"—"This suits me," he cried; "now I know how to pray;" and he continued to put up that prayer until he found mercy. Prayer is the key to heaven. By it Elijah shut up the skies; so that there was neither dew nor rain on the land for a long space of time. By prayer Jacob placed a ladder whose foot was on earth, and its top in heaven, upon which the angels of God ascended and descended. By prayer Daniel shut the lions' mouths, so that they could not hurt him when he was cast into their den. By prayer Samson shook the Philistines' temple, and destroyed the idolaters it contained. By prayer Peter was delivered from prison, for the Church yielded with God for him, and the angel of the Lord was sent to rescue him from his perilous situation. "Pray, therefore, without ceasing."

3. You must seek Christ by studying

the Bible, and by hearing the Gospel preached.

The Bible is God's book. It tells us of God and of Christ, and of every thing which we have to do. You know that the apostle Paul commended Timothy in that, "from a child he knew the Scriptures, which are able to make wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus." I will tell a story about an Irish boy who loved the Scriptures. He was one day going to one of the Bible schools, that is, a school where they are taught to read and to understand the Bible, for in many schools in Ireland they are not taught to read the Bible; and in many schools in this country, they are not taught to understand it, although they may be able to read it. On his way to school, he was met by a Popish priest who was not so averse to the Scriptures as most of his brethren are. The priest asked the boy, what book it was which he carried under his arm? "It is a will, Sir," said the boy. "What will," rejoined the priest. "The last will and testament that Jesus Christ left to me, and to all who desire to claim a title to the property therein bequeathed," replied the boy. "What did Christ leave you in that will?" "A kingdom, Sir." "Where does that kingdom lie?" "It is the kingdom of heaven, Sir." "And do you expect to reign as a king there?" "Yes, Sir, as joint-heir with Christ." "And will not every person get there as well as you?" "No, Sir, none can get there but those that claim their title to that kingdom on the ground of this will." The priest asked several other questions, to which the boy gave such satisfactory answers as quite astonished him. "Indeed," said he, "you are a good little boy: take care of the book wherein God gives you such precious promises; believe what he has said, and you will be happy here and hereafter." But when you read the Word of God, little children, remember that you cannot understand the wondrous things of God's law until your eyes are opened by the Spirit of God. You must pray to God for his Spirit to enlighten you in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. You remember, that when Hagar and her son Ishmael were cast out from the house of Abraham, that the child was ready to perish for thirst, and that although there was a well of water near at hand, she knew not of it until the Lord sent his angel to point it out to her. Therefore, you must wait upon God for his Spirit. And when attending the house of God, which you should always do with your parents and friends, you ought to listen to

what is said, as if addressed alone to you; and you should be praying for an interest in what is declared by the minister from the Bible. The next story should instruct you how to act when listening to what is preached. A little girl once heard a minister preaching from the text, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom"—Isaiah xl. 11. And when asked about the sermon, she said that she was wishing all the time the minister was preaching, that she was one of Christ's lambs. Mr. Patison, the minister, said to her, "What a happy day would it be in Bristo Street, had all my hearers been employed in a similar manner."

This is the way you are to seek Christ—by faith, by prayer, by reading and hearing God's blessed Word. And, oh! little children, what a privilege have you in having such excellent teachers to inform you how you are to seek Christ! But, probably, some of you little children are thinking that you are too young to seek Christ, and that it will be time enough to seek him when you get older. And this leads me to consider briefly,

III. The *advantage of seeking Him early.*

1. If Christ is worthy that you should seek him at all, the sooner you do so the better. And you are to seek him while he is to be found, and call on him while near. He is as deserving *now*, as ever he was, or as he shall be at any future time. And "*now* is the accepted time." "To-day," saith the Lord, "if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts." A time may come when he shall not be found though sought. You have heard of the foolish virgins, that when the Bridegroom came they were not ready to go with him into heaven, though earnestly wishing to get admission there. And you remember what is told us of Esau, that in consequence of having sold his birth-right, the blessing was also denied him, although he earnestly sought it with tears. Your hearts are more tender now than they will be after they are "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Delay is dangerous. Felix, when Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, trembled, and answered, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee;" but *this* expected time never arrived. And you know the history of the young ruler, who came to Christ, saying, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" When he heard that he must leave all, and follow

Christ, "he went away sorrowful, for he was very rich"—thus proving that "the love of money is the root of all evil;" and that "it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God;" and that we should seek Christ before the mind is fully occupied with other things, which will not easily be dislodged. Therefore, you must seek him early. But,

2. Another reason for seeking him early is, that you may die very soon, and if you have found Christ, your friends will be comforted.

Do you know, little children, that about one-third of all the children born, die in infancy. Now, if you do not seek Christ and find him before you die, you cannot go to heaven. I remember reading a story about a little girl at Portsea, who died at nine years of age; and one day in her illness, she said to her aunt, with whom she lived, "When I am dead, I should like Mr. Griffin to preach a sermon to children, to persuade them to love Jesus Christ, to obey their parents, not to tell lies, but to think about dying and going to heaven." "I have been thinking," said she, "what text I should like him to preach from—2d Kings iv. 26. You are the Shunamite, Mr. G. is the prophet, and I am the Shunamite's child. When I am dead, I dare say you will be grieved, though you need not. The prophet will come to see you, and when he says, 'How is it with the child?' you may say, 'It is well.' I am sure it will then be well with me, for I shall be in heaven, singing the praises of God. You ought to think it well too." Mr. G. accordingly fulfilled the wish of this pious child. And, children, if you die early, after seeking and finding Christ, how happy will your friends whom you have left behind be, in the assurance of your being blessed in heaven! There was once an infidel and profligate youth, who had disregarded the pious injunctions of his parents, but who one day went to hear sermon with them. The subject of discourse was, *the heavenly state*; the nature of the happiness, employment and company of the spirits of just men made perfect, were beautifully and affectingly described. While the whole congregation were in ecstasy, the parents of this youth were in tears. When they came home, the son asked why they were sad during sermon, as they were known to be good people. The mother answered, that her sorrow arose from the fear, that the son of her womb and of her vows should be banished at last from the celestial paradise. This cautious admonition, sanctioned by the father, found

its way to the youthful heart of her child, and issued in his conversion.

3. The only other reason I will urge for your seeking Christ early, is, the increase of happiness here and hereafter, which will be thereby secured to you.

I never read of any one that repented of seeking Christ too early. You are to come to Christ for happiness. God says that "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." God's favour is life, and his loving-kindness is better than life. Some people would lead you to think otherwise than the Word of God says of a religious life. Matthew Henry, the author of the excellent commentary on the Bible, left this as his dying testimony, "that a life spent in the service of God, and communion with him, is the most comfortable and pleasant life that any one can live in the world." You know, little children, that sin is the cause of all the misery in the world; and that if you seek Christ early, you will be kept from many sins into which those who seek not Christ are liable to fall, and which when set in order before them afterwards, will force these to say, "a man may bear his infirmities, but a wounded spirit, who can bear?" And the longer you have received Christ, and the greater your advances in the divine life, the more "meet will you be for the inheritance of the saints in light." The higher degree of glory you will be capable of receiving. We are told in the fifteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians, that "there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for one star differeth from another star in glory;" thus intimating, that he who soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, while he who soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully. Though all the inhabitants of heaven will be happy, we are taught to believe, that there will be companies of the redeemed encircling the throne of God at a nearer and at a more remote distance; that by divine appointment the station on high will be assigned according to the progress now made in conformity to the divine image; that Abraham the father of the faithful, and David the man according to God's own heart, and John the beloved disciple of our Lord, and such as have been long in Christ, will be placed in a more advantageous position than the thief on the cross and such like, whose conversion was instantly succeeded by his introduction to the paradise above; and that as they were here advancing from grace to grace, they shall, in a progressive ratio, be moving forward incalculably from glory to glory.

Should you not then, my friends, whether young or old, seek the Lord *now*? There is not a moment to be lost. When the Lord addresses you as he is now doing, in such language as this, (Psalm xxvii. 8,) —

“ Seek ye my face ; be prepared with the Psalmist to answer, “ my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek, yea, early will I seek thee.” May God bless his Word, and to his name be all the praise. Amen.

REPENTANCE, FAITH, AND REGENERATION ;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, GREENOCK, ON FEBRUARY 23rd, 1834.

By the Rev. RICHARD MARTIN, A.B.,

— “ *Whom we preach.*”—Col. i. 28.

IN directing your attention to these words, I shall, with an humble dependence upon the teaching of the Spirit of the Lord, endeavour to illustrate and explain the subject of the Apostle's preaching.

In the first verse of this epistle, St. Paul states, that he was the Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that the Lord's intention in appointing him to this apostleship, was graciously explained to Ananias, when he, tremblingly, hesitated to bear to the once persecuting but now humble Saul, the message of reconciliation and love. “ Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.” How this commission was understood and acted upon by St. Paul, is evident from the account of his after conduct as related by the same sacred historian : “ And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.” In the verse before the text, St. Paul speaks of “ Christ the hope of glory,” and immediately declares this to be the subject of his preaching. This was the sum and substance of his commission, and he declared it with zeal and energy. This he found to be the power of God unto his own salvation, and experienced its blessed efficacy in himself. Jesus Christ and him crucified, was the ground of his own hope, the fountain of his own comfort and consolation, the joy and rejoicing of his own soul. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at, both from the nature of his commission, and from his own experience of its efficacy, that he made it the subject of his preaching, as that which could alone afford a hope of glory to those whom he then addressed, or to those to whom his addresses would reach in after ages. In stating, however, that he preached Jesus Christ and him crucified, I must not be understood to mean that he merely dwelt upon the crucifixion of the

Redeemer as a tragical story, only calculated to work upon our natural affections. Or that it was his design in setting forth the Lord Jesus as evidently crucified before his hearers, that they should but become systematically acquainted with the subject. His great object appears to have been so to explain and illustrate the doctrines which emanate from that source, that the people of God might be led so to embrace them, as to fix upon them their hopes of happiness both in time and in eternity. Here, then, we may be led to inquire what were the chief doctrines which he inculcated. The limits of this discourse will not, however, admit of our entering into a minute and lengthened inquiry, or to our referring to all the glorious truths which he has left on record. But in order to understand aright the nature of his preaching, and the subject he was wont to inculcate, it will be necessary for us to speak of a few of the great and leading doctrines of the Gospel ; and I shall, therefore, select for our present consideration,—Repentance, Faith, and Regeneration.

These doctrines I shall be prepared to show he taught, when he made Christ Jesus the subject of his preaching.

We shall first speak of Repentance. St. Paul did not conceive that this consisted in a slight and transient feeling of sorrow, produced by any sudden thought or impression however strong. Such a feeling sometimes arises from a momentary reflection upon the evil nature of sin, or upon the punishment which awaits it eventually in a future world, a feeling which, like a passing gleam, appears for a little while, and then vanishes away. The Apostle had a deeper view of the evil of sin in itself, and a more exalted knowledge of the holiness and majesty of the great Being against whom it has been committed. Repentance for sin appears to arise

from an abiding sense of its presence, and is accompanied with a sincere and heart-felt desire for its removal. Such a feeling produces a constant agitation of mind under a knowledge of sin's condemning power, and of its hatefulness in the sight of a just and holy God, whereby it stands as a wall of partition between the creature and the Creator. It removes all rest and quietness from the conscience of the awakened sinner, dispels all peace, and turns his former sources of happiness into springs of bitterness and dissatisfaction. It leads him earnestly to inquire for some means which would be as effective in removing the evil, and in bestowing peace and comfort on his embittered conscience, as was the branch cast into the bitter waters of Marah. I now speak, not of that sorrow which worketh death, but of that which leadeth to eternal life. Nor do I mean to say that this feeling will be equally strong in all, but that it is one which, from the very nature of sin, must in a degree be common to all to whom the doctrines of the cross have been, or may be made to reach with saving power. It was evidently the great design of the Apostle that such a feeling as I have before described should arise from his preaching; and it was with this view that he endeavoured so forcibly to bring conviction of sin to the conscience. This is strikingly manifest in his epistle to the Romans. In it he proves that both Jews and Gentiles were guilty of sin, and thus were inexcusable before God. By this line of argument, he removes all possibility of self-defence, and was, therefore, the more likely to lead them to a conviction of its evil and malignant consequences, to a sincere repentance for its commission, and to a fervent desire for the removal of its condemning and polluting influence. His object was to prepare them for a willing reception of the Gospel of the Redeemer; and this he could not better effect than by stripping them of all subterfuges in themselves, and by convincing them, one and all, of their accumulated sins in the sight of God. The natural effect of such preaching as this, must be to produce a sincere and heart-felt sorrow for sin; and that this was the end which the Apostle had in view, is evident from the account given of the subject of his preaching on another occasion, in the 26th chap. 20th verse of the Acts of the Apostles: he taught that "all men should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." Now of this at least we may be well assured, that as St. Paul spoke under the inspiration of the same gracious Spirit as that by which St. Peter was directed, so

he must have set forth the same doctrines established upon the same foundation, and, therefore, pointed to Christ Jesus as "a Prince and a Saviour exalted to give repentance, as well as remission of sins." Besides, as he had been spiritually enlightened to behold wondrous things out of God's law, he must have expected that this effect would follow the preaching of Christ crucified. He had been instructed by a prophet of the Lord, to look forward to a period when he would pour out a spirit of grace and supplication upon his people, by which he would lead them to "look upon Him whom they had pierced, and to mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son; and to be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." When, therefore, the Apostle made Christ crucified the subject of his preaching, he most effectually preached repentance; for it is in the cross of Christ Jesus that we see the evil nature of sin, and the hatefulness with which God looks upon it, and, consequently, are led to feel deeply humbled for the part which each of us has had in its commission. And can there, I would ask, be any more powerful motive to sincere repentance for sin, than a believing view of a Saviour who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities? the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. Can we, my friends, look upon sin as its evil nature and hatefulness in the sight of God are there exemplified, and yet feel satisfied with ourselves by whom it is committed? When we view our own ingratitude towards, and rebellion against the God of heaven, can we behold such a wonderful display of his love, and yet not feel deeply pained and greatly humbled? Can we call to mind the number of our sins, and the accumulated guilt which we have contracted, and not be pierce to the heart, and bowed down to repentance before our God? In fine, can we look upon the cross of the Redeemer, and then upon our own share in the guilt of that sad event, nay, of our aggravated guilt in still continuing to crucify the Son of God afresh, and to put him to an open shame by our transgressions, and not feel humbled to the very dust, under a sense of our truly sinful and awful condition? No, my brethren, if the gracious spirit of the Lord lift up our hearts thus to view the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, the same Spirit will make that cross all-powerful in breaking up the fallow ground of our souls, and in leading us to a deep and abiding repentance for sin.

A repentance such as this, is a prepara-

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tion of heart truly necessary, in order to our cordial reception of the doctrine which we purposed to consider secondly, and that is,

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

St. Paul's definition of faith is, that it "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It is an act of the mind, by which the spiritual man takes as firm hold of the promises of God, as if he embraced the very substance of things which are now but the objects of hope; and relies as unhesitatingly upon the testimony which faith bears to unseen objects, as if they were made to pass before his eyes, and thus become the objects of sight. This is not a mere assent to the truths of the Gospel, but a firm and undivided reliance upon them, which leads the believer to experience the truth of the Apostle's assertion, that Christ is indeed the hope of glory, and to "rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory." It must be evident to any one who reads the Word of God, and especially the Epistles of St. Paul, with any degree of attention, and with a teachable and unprejudiced mind, that the way of salvation revealed therein is by faith in Christ Jesus, without the merit of works. This is, indeed, a doctrine opposed to the pride of the carnal mind, and one against which many objections have been raised. But it is invariably stamped upon the face of such objections, that the persons by whom they are urged, are absolutely ignorant of the nature of the statement against which they argue. Thus they argue, that salvation by faith alone, without the merit of works—that is, salvation by free grace is an encouragement to immorality, and that, by such a plan, they might be led to sin on that grace might abound. Now, this objection plainly proves that the doctrine itself is misunderstood. For, when it is stated that we are saved by faith alone, this does not imply that we are to continue in sin, or that we are freed from the obligation of keeping the law; but that whilst we argue that no merit can be attached to works, these works are still to be performed as the effect of faith, and the production of love to God and man. Those who embrace the idea that works are necessary as a cause of merit, and not as the effect and evidence of faith, look for something in themselves to recommend them to the favour of God; and if they do not rely altogether upon their own merits, they at least unite them to the merits of Christ, as a thing necessary to entitle them to salvation. But, surely, a little reflection would be sufficient to convince them that they cannot expect to make that a cause of merit

which it is their duty to do, even supposing that they could keep the whole law, and that perfectly. Neither can they make it a ground of hope that they shall be accepted through Christ for their works' sake, since they must be totally at a loss for a criterion by which to decide as to the degree of works that is necessary to entitle them to an interest in the merits of the Lord Jesus. Salvation must be, as St. Paul argues, either of grace or merit. If it be of grace, then the very mention of a free gift which grace implies, and the Scriptures speak of, shuts the door in the face of merit; for that cannot be said to be of merit, or purchased, which is "freely given." If, on the contrary, it be of merit, then there can be nothing of a gift in it, since we only obtain that to which we have earned a right, and which we may justly lay claim to as purchased by ourselves. But, since by a comparison of our lives, and our best services with the Word of God, we must be convinced that we have in nowise merited anything but the wrath of an offended Deity, it remains that we should acknowledge that we possess no claim or title in ourselves to the favour of God, and that we should gratefully receive his overtures of love and mercy as altogether his own free and, on our part, unmerited gift. This was truly the doctrine taught by the apostle St. Paul, and in the belief of which the wounded conscience can alone find rest and comfort. We wander but in a maze of uncertainty, if we seek for peace and reconciliation in any other way. But we tread in the safe and only path to heaven, when we come in the name and through the alone merits of Him who has been set forth as the only mediator between God and man. When the awakened jailer inquired what he must do to be saved, he evidently asked the question under the impression—an impression not uncommon in the present day—that he must do something on his part to merit the pardon he so earnestly desired. He thought that he must do something to make himself worthy of so great a blessing. He understood not how it was possible that God could be induced to look with favour upon one who had nothing to present before his throne but sins, or to offer as an extenuation for the guilt which he had contracted. And did St. Paul permit him to remain under this unhappy delusion? Did he desire him to do good works first, and then to come with these works as a price which he was to pay for his pardon? Did he direct that he should wait a little till he had found some better principle within him, or some stronger

evidence than his earnest prayer for instruction, or desire for safety, that he was a fit subject for the pardon and favour of his God? Surely not! Sinner as he was—and would to God that each of us felt our sins as deeply—he led him to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, and desired him to wash therein and be clean. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" were the unconditional and glad tidings which he bore to this awakened and truly penitent sinner. And this simple fact, received into the heart that was before as hard as the walls of that prison within which the Apostles were confined, had more effect in melting it to kindness and benevolence, than whole volumes of mere morality could have produced.

This is not a solitary proof of the doctrine which the Apostle taught: many such might be adduced; but I refer to this at the present time, because that, in the conduct and character of this believer, the doctrine itself is both proved and practically illustrated. It is an example in which the Apostle's assertion, in Romans iv. 5, is fully and strikingly explained—that "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." The jailor had no works to recommend him to the favour of God; he confessed that he was ungodly by his application for mercy; and he is informed by the Apostle, that if he believe on Him that justifieth the ungodly, he shall be saved, or that his faith shall be counted to him for righteousness. Before, then, we can reject the doctrine of salvation by faith without the merit of works, we must reject such texts and such examples in Scripture as bear upon the subject. We would, however, do well to consider them carefully and impartially; and I am confident that I speak safely when I say, that, if the doctrine be rejected after such a consideration, it must be against the conviction of its truth, and from a feeling of prejudice and obstinacy which warps the mind from its legitimate determination. I would now guard against all possibility of being misunderstood; for, at the same time that I would assert that we are saved by faith alone, without the merit of works, I would also declare that the faith which saves is a faith working by love, which is the strongest of all motives to action, and leading us to devotion of life and conversation to Him in whom we believe. Neither is there any merit in faith itself; it is the hand by which we embrace the offers of God's mercy—the channel through which the blessings of salvation are conveyed to

us, and is no less the gift of God than the blessings which it thus conveys. It cannot be accounted a merit in the petitioner, that he puts forth his hand to receive the benefit for which he prayed; and there is less claim to merit when it appears that he would have been impotent to receive the gift, had not his impotency been removed by the giver. The imputed righteousness of Christ alone gives us any title to justification—to life eternal; and faith, which is the chariot in which it travels to us, is put for the thing it thus conveys, and is, therefore, said to be "counted to us for righteousness."

In this, as in the former subject, it is apparent that when St. Paul made Christ crucified the subject of his preaching, he did so in order to establish the doctrines which are immovably fixed upon that foundation, and to set Him forth as the only "hope of glory" to our lost and ruined race. May it then be given to each of us to embrace the hope set before us in the dying and suffering of Him who was "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person!" May a living faith be formed within our souls, and every self-righteous imagination be brought low! And may we be so wrapped up in the robes provided for us in the righteousness of Christ, that we may be found at the great day of the coming of the Lord to be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

It now remains for us to consider the other doctrine which I have chosen as an illustration of the subject of the Apostle's preaching, which is Regeneration.

The fallen and degenerate condition of man is a subject so interwoven with the doctrines of Scripture, that it appears strange that any, who profess to believe the truth of the Word of God, could be found who would argue against its reality. Especially must this seem strange, when the experience of every man, who inquires into the hidden workings of his own soul, must strengthen the testimony thus borne to it by divine revelation. The Scriptures not only represent man as born in sin, and shaped in iniquity, but also as impotent to the removal of this evil, and the renovation of the soul to the original likeness in which it had been created. Such is the view taken of this subject in the articles of our Church. Original sin is defined to be "the fault and corruption of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit, and, therefore, in every person

born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation." Man's inability to remove this evil nature is described in no less plain and energetic language :—" The condition of man, after the fall of Adam, is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith and calling upon God." But that such a change is necessary, in order to render man a meet inhabitant for the dwelling-place of a holy God, both reason and revelation agree in proving :—" Without holiness no man can see the Lord ;" for he is " of purer eyes than to behold evil, or to look upon iniquity." It is plain, from what has been before said, that no man in his natural condition possesses this holiness, but the contrary ; and, therefore, that is absolutely necessary that a change be wrought in his natural disposition if ever he would become meet to appear before the face of God in glory. Belief in the merits of the Redeemer gives us a title to heaven, but regeneration alone can give us a meetness for it ; and these doctrines, though distinct in themselves, are yet, like the colours of the rainbow, so firmly united the one with the other, that they cannot be separated without injuring the effect of both. He that truly believes is regenerate, and he alone that is regenerate believes. They are thus closely united by the Apostle in his 2d Epistle to the Thessalonians xi. 13 ; for he says, we are " chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." Regeneration is a change wrought upon the will and affections of the sinner, by which a new and holy principle is implanted within the soul. There is no new faculty bestowed, but a new and living principle, by which the natural faculties of man are turned to their original purpose, and made to move, as it were, around their proper centre of attraction. Every unregenerate man is led captive by sin and Satan ; and those faculties which had been given by God to be used in his service, and for his glory, are thus turned out of course, and made to forward the cause and interest of his enemies. That which regeneration effects is simply the renewal of God's authority, and the removal of that sway which had been hitherto borne by sin and Satan. There is no outward change of circumstances, or mere admittance to any christian privilege, that can in itself produce this effect, or be said to be the change that is here spoken of. It is a change so forcibly expressed by the words of the Redeemer to Nicodemus, that we might as safely argue that we never had received our natural birth, as to limit the new creation,

there spoken of, to a merely metaphorical change, or admittance to outward privileges, however useful. The heart of man is the source of sin, and that source must be reached, in order to the removal of its indwelling power. No outward act can penetrate to the secret recesses of the soul, and, therefore, an inward and radical change must be effected. Now, this can be the production alone of spiritual influence ; and hence our Saviour argues, that " except a man be born, not only of water, which is the outward and visible sign, but of the Spirit, by whom the inward and spiritual grace is bestowed, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Regeneration, therefore, means the change wrought upon the soul by which it receives a new and holy bias, acts upon new and holy principles, and is directed to the performance of new and holy actions. The man that is in Christ Jesus by faith, thus becomes a new creature—" old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new." The efficient cause of this change is undoubtedly the Spirit of the living God ; which, working by the instrumentality of appointed means, especially the Word of unerring Truth, removes the heart of stone, and soul of corruption, and gives a heart of flesh, and a spirit of holiness, to be the ruling principle of after life. When St. Paul preached Jesus Christ and him crucified, he made this doctrine to appear in a prominent manner, and thus proved the importance which he himself attached to the proper understanding of the subject. The washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, was a change which he taught as absolutely necessary to our eternal salvation, and plainly showed that " Christ gave himself for us, not only that he might redeem us from all iniquity, but to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." Hence he exhorts his brethren " not to be conformed to this world in its evil principles and practices ; but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds, that they might prove what was that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

Such is a summary of some of the leading doctrines taught by St. Paul, from the consideration of which we may collect the subject upon which he loved to dwell. I have already spoken too much at large upon them, not as it respects their importance, but as it regards the limits of this discourse. I shall be brief, however, in the practical application of the subject.

I would now most earnestly beseech you, my friends, to apply to yourselves, in a way of self-examination, what has been said. In-

quire as to the effect that has been produced upon you, individually, by the preaching of those doctrines that had been taught by St. Paul. It is clearly evident that his preaching was founded upon Jesus Christ and him crucified ; and that, by the application of this subject, he sought to produce within the soul of each deep repentance, steadfast faith, and a new creation. Ask yourselves, then, as in the presence of God this day, whether the Apostle's object has been realized as it regards you individually. Have you sought—earnestly sought for the grace of God, that a deep sense of your sins may be imprinted upon you, and that you may be led truly to repent of all your misdeeds ? Has Christ Jesus, the hope of glory, been established and fixed within your souls by a lively faith in him ? And has the transforming influence of the Spirit of the Lord been present with you, in order to the production of a new and heavenly nature ? These are inquiries of the very highest importance, inasmuch as upon the answers which each of us can give to them, depends not only our peace here, but our eternal destiny hereafter. I doubt not, as it is a principle fixed in the nature of man, but that each of you desire to attain to the enjoyment of perfect happiness, and that you look forward to the time, however ill-founded your hope, when you shall be admitted to a participation in the happiness of heaven. Few, if any, can admit the thought, that theirs shall be an endless misery ; and most even of the unconverted have some ground of hope that they shall obtain a seat in the bright mansions of heaven. But it seldom enters into the hearts of such to inquire, whether the foundation upon which they build for eternity is such as has been laid by the Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ ? They form some crude and undigested notions of the nature of heaven—of the God who dwells there—of the souls that have been already admitted, and of the appointed way for journeying thither. Their views are not formed upon any scriptural authority ; but simply arise

from some erroneous and prejudiced notions imbibed in early life, or thoughts worked out, in more mature years, by the imagination of the carnal and unconverted mind. Man is prone to error, and chiefly on the subject of religion ; it is, therefore, most desirable that we should impartially inquire into the views which we have formed on the subject. We spare no pains, no exertions, no self-denial, in order to be rightly informed on subjects likely to forward our temporal interest, and to guard us against every possibility of mistake or error. We are wise in our generation, as it respects worldly objects ; would to God we were equally wise and earnest in our desire for heavenly blessings ! We labour for the meat that perisheth ; but forget that there is no less labour required, in order to our participating in that which endureth unto everlasting life. My dear brethren, inquire if this be applicable to you. Examine yourselves by the subject now before us ; search and try yourselves by the progress you have made, not only in the knowledge, but in the practical experience, of those doctrines inculcated by the apostle St. Paul. Ask yourselves if the time, and labour, and anxiety, expended upon the prayerful perusal of the Word of God, have been commensurate to the vital importance of the truths therein revealed. Beware of self-deception, or self-flattery ; deal faithfully with yourselves as before the bar of God ; judge yourselves impartially, and with a sincere determination, by the grace of God, to avoid that which is evil, and to pursue that which is good, that you may not be judged and condemned everlastinglly hereafter. And, now, may the Spirit of the Lord apply what has been said to each of our consciences, to be an arrow of conviction to the unconverted, and a subject of joy and consolation to the adopted sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty—to whom, with the Son and the Holy Ghost, the one God of our salvation, be glory, dominion, and honour, now and for evermore. Amen.

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To whom all Communications should be addressed.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 12TH APRIL, 1834.

107. | SERMON by the Rev. DAVID SIMPSON, A.M., Aberdeen.
SERMON by the Rev. WILLIAM AULD, Tollcross.

THE APOSTOLIC INJUNCTION "TO ABSTAIN FROM ALL APPEARANCE OF EVIL," CONSIDERED AS A SCRIPTURAL WARRANT FOR TEMPERANCE SOCIETIES;

A SERMON PREACHED IN TRINITY CHAPEL, ON THE EVENING OF THE 10th NOVEMBER, 1833, AT THE REQUEST OF THE ABERDEEN TEMPERANCE SOCIETY,

By the Rev. DAVID SIMPSON, A.M.,
Minister of that Chapel.

"Abstain from all appearance of evil."—1 THESS. v. 22.

THE injunction contained in the text is of very general application, and, if seriously considered and uniformly complied with, would prevent us from saying and doing things which are commonly thought perfectly allowable and harmless. It is often very difficult to convince a person that certain modes of speech, and certain practices that prevail among the class of people to which he belongs, are in their own nature injurious and sinful, and ought, therefore, to be renounced; but it is comparatively easy to show that they have at least the *appearance* of evil, and that they have a tendency to encourage others to do that which is really evil. In our attempts, therefore, to persuade persons of this description to abstain from personal gratifications, which we think dangerous and destructive, but which they cannot view in the same light, the brief precept which we have now read is often of very great service. Though we cannot succeed in proving, to their satisfaction, that the things to which we allude are unlawful and hurtful in themselves; yet, if we can show that there is something suspicious and doubtful about them—that there is an *appearance* of evil connected with them, and that, by refraining from them, they could neither do injury to themselves nor others, we think ourselves fully warranted, by the apostolic command, to urge them immediately to abandon all such questionable practices.

For example, there are some persons who

will not admit that there is any thing wrong in taking a walk on the Lord's day. They affirm that they are refreshed by it after the fatigues of the week, and that they can be as well employed while breathing the pure air of the fields, as in the retirement of their closets. Now, there can be no doubt that a person *may* be employed in devoutly meditating on the sublime doctrines of the Gospel, and fervently praying to the Most High, in the one place as well as in the other; and that, if he has a companion like-minded with himself, he may carry on with him a religious and profitable conversation. But if the careless multitude, who know not how you are employed, take encouragement from your example, to spend away the Sabbath in idleness and in folly; and if, when reproved for their conduct, they urge that you are known to walk abroad on this day as well as they, there is, at least, the appearance of evil in the practice to which you are addicted. And should not a regard to the best interests of your fellow-creatures dispose you to renounce it? None of us liveth to himself; none is permitted to consult exclusively his own comfort and gratification: the principles of Christianity require us to abstain even from things which are lawful in themselves, if, by partaking of them, we prejudice the minds of our fellow-creatures against the religion which we profess, and embolden them to do that which is sinful. The apostle Paul always acted

on this benevolent principle. He was fully persuaded that the distinction between meats, which subsisted under the law of Moses, was abolished, and that he might lawfully eat any kind of food, which was adapted to the nourishment of his body. But while there were some weak Christians who had great doubts with regard to this point, and who, by his example, might be prompted to do that which they thought to be sinful, and which was sinful to them while they thought so, he declared, that it was good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby his brother should stumble, or be offended, or made weak; and that if meat should make his brother to offend, he would eat no flesh while the world stood, lest he should make his brother to offend.

We may apply the same rule to horse-racing. There are many respectable persons who go to witness this spectacle, who affirm that they have nothing else in view but to enjoy a little amusement, and to give a holiday to their families; and that they decidedly disapprove of the intoxication, licentiousness, profanity, and gambling, which so greatly abound on such occasions. But is there not the *appearance* of evil in the sanction which their presence gives to such assemblies? If persons of fair reputation would refuse to give them any countenance, would they not soon dwindle away? and would not all the horrible effects, of which they are productive, disappear along with them? How, then, can the respectable portion of the community who attend such scenes be exempted from the charge of indirectly encouraging all the abominations with which horse-racing is accompanied? Is it not universally found that the announcement of a horse-race is the signal for all the thieves, swindlers, and blackguards, throughout the country, to assemble together to practise their villainous arts on the unwary and unsuspecting? Is not drunkenness then exhibited in the most shameful manner, and all those vices which drunkenness engenders? Are not many of the working classes withdrawn from their employments for a whole week together, which they spend in the lowest debauchery, while their families at home are ready to starve? Is it not then, using very gentle language to say, that there is, at least, the *appearance* of evil in being present at spectacles, which are attended with such flagrant violations of the laws both of God and man? And is it not, therefore, the duty of every one, who has

the least regard to the glory of God, and the welfare of his fellow-creatures, never to give them the least countenance? Is it possible that intelligent, benevolent men could derive any pleasure from beholding such scenes as these, if they reflected on the enormous evils of which they are productive, and which have now become so obvious and palpable as to draw forth the strong and indignant protest of the christian part of our population? Surely every one who has been accustomed to frequent the race-ground should seriously ask himself whether he can honestly say, that in this respect he has been abstaining from all appearance of evil, and that he is not in the least degree chargeable with the abominable vices which are there practised!

Further; this apostolic precept, if complied with in its true scope and meaning, would prevent some from attending the theatre and other similar places of amusement, who will not admit that their conduct is sinful. "We go to such places," they say, "merely to enjoy a little relaxation. A well-acted play affords us a very high, and we must affirm, rational gratification. We do not associate with any of the low characters that are to be found in the theatre; we practise none of the vices to which they are addicted. We go home immediately after the entertainment is concluded, and we resume our employments next day as usual. We cannot, therefore, see that in this we have done any evil." I am fully persuaded however, that you have done much evil even to yourselves; and that the pernicious effects which theatrical amusements produce on the mind will, ere long, be manifested. But all I wish to show at present, in order to prove that it is your duty to abstain from them, is, that they have the *appearance* of evil. Now, let me ask, Is there no appearance of evil in listening to compositions in which the name of the great God of heaven is often grossly profaned, and every thing that is serious and devout treated with ridicule? Is there no appearance of evil in encouraging a profession, which is universally allowed to produce the most deplorable effects on almost every one who engages in it? Is there no appearance of evil in contributing to add respectability to a place, where the very worst passions of the heart are often strongly excited, and where many of our youth, who might have been the ornaments and the blessings of society, are corrupted and ruined? Is there no appear-

ance of evil in fostering the idea, that attendance on the theatre is not dangerous either to the principles or morals of those who frequent it ; while the fact is, that the most depraved characters of the town are uniformly to be found there, seeking whom they may seduce and betray, and that vast numbers have ascribed their ruin to the representations which they there witnessed, and the company which they there met ? Surely every reflecting man must allow, that there is in this practice a very strong appearance of evil, and that, therefore, on this ground alone, he ought to abstain from it !

Card-playing, and other similar games of chance, will afford us an illustration of the same kind. "We abhor gambling," say some, "but we enjoy a quiet game at cards with a friend ; and what harm is there in this ? We play for amusement, not for money, except, perhaps, a mere trifle to give interest to the game. We know not how we could contrive to pass the long winter evenings, if we had not some resource of this nature. We cannot admit, therefore, that there is even the appearance of evil in this practice." Indeed ! Look at that wretched gamester, who is daily found at the whist or the billiard table, who madly stakes all he possesses on the chance of the game ; who is constantly kept in a state of the most feverish agitation ; who has lost all relish for the sober employments of life, and who exhibits all the sad symptoms of a ruined man. And, let me ask, how did he commence that fatal mode of life which he is now pursuing ? How did he contract that inveterate love of gaming by which he is now characterized ? He was accustomed to play what is called a harmless game at cards with his companions. At first, amusement was his only object : he had no wish, and made no attempt, to win the money of others, and he did not run the risk of losing his own. After going on in this way, however, for some time, he began to stake small sums to prevent the game from becoming insipid. Then the spirit of gambling was excited, and he gradually increased the amount for which he played, till at length it became a matter of very serious importance to him whether he was to win or lose ; and then his whole soul became absorbed in the game, and every other sort of employment seemed to him dull and uninteresting. The dread of poverty, which is continually staring him in the face, accompanied with the hope of retrieving his fallen

fortunes, keeps him always in a state of the most unnatural excitement, by which his health is undermined, and a strong dislike excited to all regular occupations. And when all efforts to improve his circumstances have failed, as they generally do, he then becomes desperate, and ready to perpetrate the most atrocious crimes.

Is there no appearance of evil, then, in countenancing an amusement, by which the love of play is often excited in the minds of the young, and which, increasing by indulgence, at length renders them confirmed and miserable gamesters ? And is there no appearance of evil in wasting away so many precious hours in so silly and unprofitable a manner ? When our bodies are fatigued, and our minds need relaxation, we can surely betake ourselves to some recreation of a far less questionable nature, by which we will lay a snare neither for ourselves nor others, and by which we may really obtain the object which we have in view. It is related of the late Mr. Scott, author of the *Commentary*, that in the days of his ignorance and unbelief he was accustomed to play at cards, and that even after he became serious and devout, he did not immediately abandon the practice. The following incident, however, led him entirely to renounce it. "Being," says he, "on a visit to one of my parishioners at Ravenstone, I walked out to visit some of my poor people, when one of them (the first person, as far as I know, to whom my ministry had been decidedly useful) said to me, 'I have something which I wish to say to you, but I am afraid you may be offended.' I answered that I could not promise, but I hoped I should not. She then said, 'you know A. B. ; he has lately appeared attentive to religion, and has spoken to me concerning the Sacrament ; but last night, he with C. D. and some others, met to keep Christmas ; and they played at cards, drank too much, and in the end quarrelled, and raised a sort of riot. And when I remonstrated with him on his conduct, as inconsistent with his professed attention to religion, his answer was, There is no harm in cards ; Mr. Scott plays at cards !' This smote me to the heart. I saw that if I played at cards, however soberly and quietly, the people would be encouraged by my example to go farther ; and if Paul would eat no flesh while the world stood, rather than cause his weak brother to offend, it would be inexcusable in me to throw such a

stumblingblock in the way of my parishioners, in a matter certainly neither needful nor expedient." Now, it is certain that many persons, whose love of gaming is hurrying them on rapidly to ruin, when urged by those who feel a deep anxiety for their welfare to give up so dangerous a species of amusement, plead the example of decent, sober, respectable people, who frequently spend their evenings in playing games of chance. Is there not, then, the appearance of evil in card-playing? and ought it not, therefore, in obedience to the apostolic injunction, to be abstained from?

But there is another practice which I think as inconsistent with the injunction of the text, as any of those which have been mentioned—I mean the practice of drinking spirituous liquors. And if it can be shown that this is a species of indulgence which is altogether unnecessary—which is very insidious—which is exceedingly expensive, and which is actually producing the most ruinous effects on the minds and bodies of our countrymen—nothing more will be requisite to convince us, that it has, at least, the appearance of evil, and that, therefore, according to this precept of the Apostle, we ought to abstain from it.

We are often asked to produce our scriptural warrant for Temperance Societies, the leading article of which is abstinence from spirituous liquors. Now, if our opponents mean by this, that we are bound to refer to the passage which enjoins us in so many words to endeavour to discourage drunkenness by forming such institutions, we readily acknowledge that no such text is to be found; but we assert, that neither is there any text in the Bible which commands us to attempt to propagate the Gospel by forming Bible, Missionary, and Tract Societies; neither is there any text which enjoins us in so many words to institute colleges and divinity halls, or to build and endow schools and hospitals. But are they, therefore, destitute of scriptural warrant? Are they not perfectly agreeable to the whole tenor of revelation? Are they not directly calculated to promote the two grand objects, which the Bible requires us continually to keep in view, namely, the glory of God, and the happiness of our fellow-men? And if it can be shown that Temperance Societies aim at the very same things, and that they endeavour to accomplish them by means that are perfectly agreeable to Scripture, we think this abun-

dantly sufficient to establish their claims to scriptural sanction. But, in addition to the arguments which may be derived from these sources, in favour of such institutions, we affirm that, in the words of the text, we have a direct scriptural warrant for them. We are decidedly of opinion that spirit-drinking has, to use the softest terms, the appearance of evil, and, therefore, we think ourselves bound by this precept to renounce it. There are, indeed, multitudes in this spirit-loving age and country who deny this position, and who, with great hardihood, assert, in contradiction to the strongest evidence, that there is not even the appearance of evil in spirit-drinking. With such persons we are of course completely at issue. Proceed we, then, in dependence on divine aid, to endeavour to ascertain where the truth lies in regard to this important point.

I observe, then, in *the first place*, that drinking spirits, even in small quantities, is a very *insidious* practice, and very frequently issues in the intemperate use of them. We all know that ardent spirits are to be ranked in that class of articles which are called stimulants—mere stimulants; that is, they excite the heart for a time to more vigorous actions quicken the circulation of the blood, and diffuse a temporary glow of heat over the whole system. Now, it is a fact admitted on all hands, that things of this nature operate less and less powerfully upon the body, the more frequently they are used; that the quantity of them, which at first produced very sensible effects, soon loses its influence; and that, in order to produce the same degree of excitement as was at first felt, it is necessary to increase the quantity. And it is this circumstance which renders the practice of drinking spirits so very dangerous. When a person *begins* to partake of them, a very small portion produces an agreeable sensation through his whole frame; he seems to have acquired an increased degree of energy; his animal spirits are excited, and he is disposed to be in good humour with himself and all around him. In order to enjoy the same pleasurable feelings, he again and again has recourse to them. Ere long, however, he finds that the same quantity will not produce the same effect; and that, therefore, if he wishes to raise himself to the same pitch of exhilaration, he must swallow a larger portion than formerly. He does so, and he succeeds in renewing his former agreeable sensations. But, in a short time,

even this quantity ceases to produce such effects upon him, and, therefore, he is tempted to make an addition to it. At first, perhaps, he hesitates for a little; but, having now contracted a relish for this species of enjoyment, his scruples are very frequently overcome, and he deliberately takes a quantity which, at first, he would have reckoned excessive, and which would have produced intoxication. The love of strong drink is now fully established; his craving for it becomes insatiable; he drinks not only in the evening, but even during the hours of business; he soon becomes utterly besotted, entirely neglects his employment, and abandons himself to habitual intemperance.

By such a gradation as this have vast multitudes in our land proceeded, from the sparing and moderate use of spirituous liquors, to confirmed and shameless drunkenness. Step by step they have advanced in their fatal career, till at length they have thrown off all restraints, and become, what they once confidently thought they could never be, degraded, infatuated, despised drunkards. The man, who indulges himself in what he calls the moderate use of ardent spirits, looks with horror on the drunkard as he reels through the streets, without a gleam of intelligence in his face; but he does not consider that that wretched man was once as temperate as he—once, perhaps, as respectable as he; but that, by regularly using this article, he acquired an immoderate desire for it, which he is determined to gratify, whatever may be the consequences. It would be very easy to place before you a great many most affecting illustrations of the truth of these observations. We might mention the cases of a multitude of persons once highly respectable, and respected in their sphere of life—once perfectly free from the least suspicion of intemperance; but who having, in an evil hour, begun to use spirituous liquors, and having imbibed the idea alas! so common, that they afford a beneficial, or, at all events, a harmless sort of gratification, became, by degrees, fonder and fonder of them, till at length they became openly and disgracefully intemperate.

Now this is not at all to be wondered at, how much soever it ought to be lamented. It is the natural and direct tendency of the practice of which we have been speaking to lead to such a melancholy result. And no one who regularly uses spirits has any sufficient security that he will not become as much addicted to liquor, and as wretched

as any of those whom he now despises. It is vain to urge that he is not conscious of having any strong desire for it at present. The most intemperate can recollect a period of their lives when they could make the same assertion. It is vain to urge that he abhors the character of the drunkard. They have also contemplated such a person with the same feeling; and to any one who hinted that they also might yet sink to the same state of degradation, they would have been disposed to say with indignation, as Hazael did to the prophet, “Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?” Nor is it any sufficient proof that the frequent use of spirits has not the tendency we have ascribed to it, because many have partaken of them every day of their lives, and yet still have maintained the character of temperate men. There may be various circumstances which counteract its native tendency, and prevent it from producing in these cases its natural effects. They may be powerfully influenced by a regard to their health, their reputation, and their worldly interest; they may be professors of religion, and accustomed to condemn intemperance in others; and the dread of the ruinous consequences which flow from an immoderate use of strong drink, may deter them from taking more than is usually called a moderate quantity. But this is no evidence whatever that the daily use of liquor does not produce an increasing desire for it; and that it does not strongly tempt the person who partakes of it in this way to increase the quantity, in order to produce the desired measure of excitement. We might with as much reason assert, that the daily habit of pilfering has not a tendency to bring a man to the gallows, because the dread of so awful and disgraceful a punishment renders him very careful to conceal his dishonest propensity, and prevents him from stealing to such an amount as would endanger his life. Very often, indeed, all the motives which we have mentioned are not strong enough to check the growing love of spirits which the daily and moderate use of them tends to excite; and the man who once maintained a highly honourable station in society, and who might have descended to his grave with the esteem of all who knew him, proceeds from moderate indulgence to the borders of intemperance, lingers there for a short time, and then crosses the boundary, which, even in the world’s estimation, separates the sober from

the drunkard, and becomes the associate of the lowest and most despicable characters.

Now, if it be an established fact that the frequent and moderate use of spirituous liquors has the tendency which we have mentioned; if it thus produces a strong desire for a greater quantity of them in order to raise our spirits to the required degree, it certainly has the appearance of evil, and we ought, therefore, to refrain from it. Is it prudent, is it safe, is it consistent with a becoming sense of our own weakness, to tamper with liquoids of so deceitful and insidious a nature? Suppose that we were informed that a person was going about through the country, who was exceedingly desirous of insinuating himself into our society; that by his overflowing spirits, his lively conversation and humorous jokes, he possessed the power of rendering himself exceedingly agreeable; that he almost always acquired a very powerful ascendancy over those who once agreed to receive him, so that he could prevail on them to do almost any thing which he recommended; but that he was a deep designing villain, whose aim was to lead us on step by step to the commission of the most atrocious wickedness, and that he had already succeeded in deceiving, betraying, and ruining multitudes in every part of the country; would we not be careful not to receive him into our houses, and not to give him any opportunity of exercising his influence over us? And would we not think that man very rash and presumptuous, who voluntarily became his companion, in order that he might enjoy the mirth and jollity which he had the power of producing, confidently depending on his own wisdom and resolution to resist and defeat any schemes which he might have formed to lead him astray? And would we not, in such circumstances, think ourselves warranted to predict, that he would, ere long, pay the penalty of his self-confidence and imprudence?

Now, do we not act as foolish and dangerous a part, when we accustom ourselves to the use of spirituous liquors? Is it not an unquestionable fact, that all who have become intemperate were at first, with hardly any exception, moderate drinkers? And should not this consideration alone startle any reflecting man, and excite a salutary dread, lest he also should in the end become one of the victims of moderate indulgence. And should not every one who is confident in the strength of his own re-

solution to avert such a calamity, hear a voice whispering in his ears, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Many whose previous character was as good as your own, many who regarded intemperance with as great abhorrence as you, have, by regularly using spirituous liquors, become excessively addicted to them, and brought themselves to disgrace and ruin. And what good reason have you to hope, that you shall not in the end become intemperate also? Are you not acting in the same manner as they did, and deliberately making use of an article which you know is exceedingly deceitful? Is it possible for you, in such circumstances, to adopt sincerely the petition in our Lord's prayer, "Lead us not into temptation?" Do you not by this practice, voluntarily enter into temptation—a temptation to which vast multitudes of your fellow-men have yielded, and by which they have been undone? Can you warrantably hope that God will preserve you while you wilfully put yourselves in the way of danger? Has not our Lord decided this point in the answer which he gave to Satan, when he tempted him to throw himself from the battlement of the temple, alleging that God had given his angels charge over him, and that, therefore, no evil could befall him. Instead of complying with this crafty suggestion, and thereby putting his heavenly Father's care to an unnecessary test, he instantly said, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." And if you should still refuse to renounce the use of spirits, and if moderate drinking should have the same sad issue with you as it has had with thousands once fully equal to you in all the qualities which constitute respectable members of society, may you not be justly condemned as the authors of your own destruction?

Suppose that a person knew, that when under the influence of liquor he became exceedingly quarrelsome and violent, and ready to inflict fatal injuries on his companions, and that whenever he took a small quantity, it immediately produced an insatiable craving for more; would it not be his duty to abstain from it altogether? And if, though aware of the effect which spirits had upon him, he would not consent to renounce them, would he not be justly chargeable with indifference to the lives of his associates, and would it not be the grossest presumption in him to pray before hand, that he might be preserved from doing harm to

any of his fellow-creatures? But in what respect is your conduct less guilty than his? You know, or at least you ought to know, and it can only be ascribed to wilful ignorance if you do not know, that when a person begins to use spirituous liquors, and acquires a relish for the excitement which they produce, he is under a very strong temptation to take more and more of them, in proportion as their stimulating power is diminished by being frequently introduced into the bodily system; and that, though before he begins to drink he firmly resolves to confine himself to a certain moderate portion, yet this resolution is for the most part entirely disregarded, after he has taken the quantity which he had fixed on as being sufficient. And have not some of you already had personal experience of the truth of this observation? When you have drunk your usual moderate allowance, do you not often feel a strong inclination to take an additional quantity? Do you not endeavour to find out reasons to justify you for doing so, and are you not glad when you can find any decent pretext for this purpose? And are there not some who are conscious that the quantity of spirits which you consume at present is considerably greater than when you first began to make use of them? And is there not, therefore, reason to fear that you are already on the high road to intemperance?

Will any one, then, affirm that there is not even the appearance of evil in the use of ardent spirits? What! No appearance of evil in a practice which has so strong a tendency to beget a love of intoxicating liquors, and a practice by which so many have been rendered hopelessly intemperate! And should not a sense of your own weakness, and a regard to your own safety, lead you to abstain from it?

But even though you were fully assured that you had energy and decision of mind sufficient to prevent you from ever becoming the slave of intoxication, have you no regard to your children and domestics, whose minds may not be so strongly fortified against the dangers of spirit-drinking? Do you ever consider what must be the effect produced upon their minds by seeing you regularly partake of this article as a source of high enjoyment, and offering it to your friends as a mark of respect and kindness? Must they not reckon it to be possessed of very valuable properties, and must not their ideas of pleasure be early and

closely associated with the use of it? Must not a strong desire to obtain spirituous liquors be thus excited in their breasts?—a desire which is often greatly strengthened by your giving them occasionally a little of this article as a token of your special favour. And if you have any real affection for your children, ought you not to shudder at the thought of initiating them into the love of strong drink? Is it possible for you to take a more effectual method of ensuring their degradation and misery both in this world and in the world to come? It is vain to say that you have no such intention. I do not charge you with being such monsters as *knowingly* to train up your offspring for perdition; but this does not prove that such is not the tendency of the practice to which you are addicted. I am most firmly convinced, even by personal observation, that many respectable families where spirits are regularly consumed are the very nurseries of intemperance. This may appear a very strong assertion, but, alas! it is too well founded. When children observe (and they are very attentive observers of every thing that is done under their parents' roof) that those whom they are accustomed to reverence and to imitate frequently make use of spirituous liquors; that they have recourse to them whenever they intend to be more than ordinarily cheerful, and give them to others for the very same purpose, what is the effect which such a practice is likely to have upon their minds? Is it not to inspire them with a very high idea of the value of these liquors, and of the pleasure which they are capable of affording? And is it possible to form a more pernicious association in the mind of a child than this? Is it at all to be wondered at, that young people who frequently hear their parents celebrating the praises of strong drink, urging their visitors to partake of it, and assuring them that it will do them much good, should entertain a very high opinion of its excellence, and that they should eagerly avail themselves of every opportunity of obtaining it? And when their parents or any of the company bestow on them a little as a proof of special kindness, and endeavour to make it as palatable to them as possible, how can it be otherwise than that a taste should be formed for it, and that as they grow up and obtain the means of indulgence, they should gratify it to excess? And is it not a melancholy fact, that many of the rising generation are thus trained to

habits of drinking by their own parents? What right, then, have such persons to complain when their children become idle, and vicious, and dissipated; when they plunder them of their property, and pierce their hearts with anguish? They are just reaping the fruit of the seed which they have sown. They have themselves corrupted their children's minds, and taught them, both by precept and example, to love liquor, and then they bitterly reproach them for their misconduct. They should remember, and remember with shame and remorse, that they are themselves the principal cause of their children's unquenchable thirst for ardent spirits, and that they have accomplished their object as effectually as if they had actually intended to educate them for drunkards. They may, perhaps, be shocked and filled with indignation when such a charge is brought against them; but let me ask them, if they really wished to create in the breasts of their children a strong attachment to any particular gratification, what more effectual methods could they adopt than frequently partaking of it themselves, and strongly recommending it to others? You are not at all surprised that they should become fond of those persons whose good qualities you often praise, in whose society you spend your happiest hours, and whose powers of exciting mirth and jollity they have themselves often witnessed. Nay, you would be very much surprised, and even offended, if they should feel no affection for them. Have you, then, any good reason to be surprised, that your children should contract a very great love for strong drink, after having heard you so often recount its valuable properties, and urge those to whom you intended to show the warmest regard to partake of it, and after having seen the scenes of merriment which it is capable of producing? Is there not, let me ask, the appearance of evil in a practice which tends to exert so pernicious an influence on the minds of the young, and which, in so many instances, has actually been the grand cause to which their ruin is to be ascribed? Ah! when you look around you, and behold so many victims of youthful intemperance, say, would it not have been well for them that they had been early taught to look upon spirits with abhorrence, rather than to consider them as the chief source of enjoyment? And will you, by persisting in the use of spirits yourselves, and pressing them upon your friends, de-

clare to your children and servants in the most impressive way, that you think them a very valuable article, and that they contribute greatly to the promotion of social happiness? If you do, one of two things must be admitted: either you are utterly careless of the welfare of your children, and are determined not to renounce the use of spirits, whatever may be the consequences to them; or, you do not believe that the practice to which you are addicted, has the tendency which we have ascribed to it. Perhaps there are none who will acknowledge that they belong to the former class, though I am persuaded the number of them is not small. And, therefore, those who are unwilling to abandon their drinking practices, labour hard to convince themselves and others, that partaking a social glass in the domestic circle can have no such effect upon the minds of their families as has been affirmed, and that all such statements are extravagant and contemptible. But I entreat such persons not to adopt such an opinion too hastily, without calmly and impartially investigating this point, and without attending to the testimony which experience gives in regard to it. And if you were seriously to examine this matter, and with a sincere desire of arriving at a right conclusion, I doubt not but you would be thoroughly convinced, that in this respect, the practice of spirit-drinking has the appearance of evil, and ought, therefore, to be relinquished.

It is, indeed, hardly possible to conceive any thing which is more decidedly condemned by the words of the text, than the habit of which we have been speaking. Surely whatever has a tendency to produce a love for ardent spirits, and consequently to make us drunkards; whatever contributes to form false ideas of the nature of spirits in others, and to encourage them to become intemperate also, must be considered as an evil of the most appalling kind! But it is a fact that cannot be denied, that what is called the moderate use of spirituous liquors is the most effectual method that ever has been tried to convert men into drunkards and that it is fostering in the minds of the young those false notions of the excellent qualities of those liquors, which so early hurry them on to the gulf of intemperance. On the moderate drinkers of spirits, therefore, there lies the heavy guilt of wilfully exposing themselves to the strongest temptations to become drunkards, and of en-

couraging and perpetuating a system, which is as regularly producing a new crop of drunkards every year, as the seed sown in the spring yields its increase in the harvest. And who that considers the tremendous evils which flow from the abounding intemperance of our land, would not shudder at the thought of giving the slightest countenance to it in others, or making the slightest approaches to it himself? Let, however,

this matter be subjected to a fair and candid examination, and I am fully persuaded, that moderate drinkers will be found to be the great patrons of intemperance, because they render respectable the practice which directly leads to it, and that there can be no reasonable expectation that our nation's drunkenness will ever be cured, so long as they give their sanction to moderate indulgence.

(To be concluded in our next.).

PAUL'S REASONING BEFORE FELIX;

A FAST-DAY DISCOURSE, PREACHED AT CAMPBELTON,

By the Rev. WILLIAM AULD, Jun.,

Minister of the Relief Church, Tolcross.

And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.—
ACTS xxiv. 24, 25.

THE office of the christian ministry cannot be magnified too highly. It excels every other pursuit of this busy world—in honour as far as heaven rises above the earth—in importance as far as eternity stretches beyond time—and in the *awfulness of its responsibility* beyond the tongue of man to tell, or the heart of man to conceive. If, therefore, we, the ministers of religion, speak to you with authority, proclaiming with all faithfulness the blessings of the Gospel, or thundering forth all the terrors of the law, we entreat you to bear with us; for to act otherwise, would be dangerous to you, dishonouring to God, and fatal to ourselves; and woe be unto us if we speak not the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. And, in such a style of preaching, we are but imitating the example of Christ, the Head of the Church—of all the prophets that went before him, and of all the apostles that followed after. Look to the Apostle in the case before us!—his body was in chains, but his spirit was free; though he stood at the bar of a tyrant that could dispense life or death at pleasure, yet he did not flatter, or fawn, or seek his favour, but, rising above the smiles or the frowns of man, he boldly pointed out his sins, warning him of his danger; and, as an humble advocate of the cross of Christ, he directed him along

that road to the city of refuge, which the mightiest prince, as well as the meanest beggar, alike must take. “He spake,” it is said, “of the faith in Christ,” and he “reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come;” and such was the impression produced by all this, that, it is added, “Felix trembled, and said, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”

There are three things suggested by these words, which we shall endeavour to bring before you. First, the *manner* in which Paul preached; second, the *topics* on which he preached; and, third, the *effect* which his preaching on the present occasion produced.

I. Let us consider the *manner* or the *style* of Paul's preaching on the present occasion.

He did not utter dogmatic assertions; what he advanced he supported by argument. He did not deal in vague declamation; he did not indulge in airy speculations which might please, but not profit; he did not call to his aid the artifices of rhetoric, in order to produce effect; nor did he labour to adorn his discourse with the embellishments of a gaudy eloquence, which, like the meteor's flash, might dazzle for a moment, but leave behind not a ray of light or of heat; he did not work up some pathetic

story, or breathe forth the glowing descriptions of fancy to touch the tender passions of the heart. No. His was a nobler aim than that of the actor, merely to please the ear, or draw tears from the eye. "He reasoned," he addressed man as a rational being; and his great object was to enlighten the mind and carry conviction to the judgment. True it is that until the heart be moved, no good can be done; and we grant that the feelings and affections of the inner man do occupy a prominent place in the religion that is from above. But as in nature, so also it is in grace—*light* must first be created. It would be like tracing figures on the sand, to be effaced by the returning wave, if we excited the feelings of the heart, without having beforehand imparted knowledge to the head. That devotion which is founded on ignorance will be superstition, and may answer well enough the selfish purposes of priesthood; but it can never be called a "reasonable service," nor will it be accepted by Him who forbiddeth "the halt, the maimed, and the *blind*, to be offered in sacrifice." Accordingly, the Apostle laboured to bring forward the principles of Christianity—to establish its facts—to defend its evidences—to explain its truths, and to clear up its evidences, whilst all his "reasonings" on these topics he made to bear on the judgment. Knowing that if the judgment were once convinced, then, but not till then, the conscience might be aroused, and the heart taken possession of.

He reasoned. But "what," asks the infidel, "is there in the christian religion to reason about? It is the religion of babes, not of men. It fits the dark ages that are bygone, but not the present." In reply to such an accuser, we would say, Have you the presumption thus to decide on a religion that you have never examined, or examined, like the spy, solely with a view to find out faults? True our religion is fitted for babes; and it is its greatest glory that a "wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein." But this is also as true, that it affords scope for the exercise of the loftiest intellect, and among its disciples it tells of a Locke, a Newton, and a Bacon, who paused in the midst of their inquiries to exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!" And if but comparatively few of the great and the learned of this world have hitherto bowed before the cross of Christ, it is just because the lessons of the Gospel are too

simple, and its precepts too pure for the pride of their unrenewed hearts. And on what occasion, we would ask, did ever our holy Christianity shrink back from the scrutinizing glance of this world's philosophy? Every page of history can attest how it has always courted inquiry: it asks nothing but justice; it seeks no indulgence; it craves no mercy. Every other religion retires at the approach of light; but just as the day of science and of art draws nearer its meridian effulgence, the christian temple appears the stronger in its foundations, and the more majestic in its structure. And the farther you enter into its interior, and the more closely, by the torch of reason, you examine its altar, its divinity, its sacrifice, and its worship, the more clearly will you discover inscribed on all around you, "The hand that made us is divine!" Well, then, might the Apostle, as he went about Sion, and showed its bulwarks to the infidel king, exert all the reasoning powers of his highly-gifted mind; well might he call into exercise his rich and varied stores of Greek and Jewish learning; the occasion befitting archangel better than man.

He reasoned. This teaches us that he did not lay aside the *means*. He did not, like some, leave the individual, as the saying is, "in the hands of God," and look on as if he had nothing more to do till "the period of divine visitation." On the contrary, he bent his whole soul to produce conviction and conversion in the mind of Felix, with as much earnestness as if all depended on himself—fully aware that, as in nature, so also in grace, nothing can be done without labour; and the more labour we bestow, the more reason will we have to hope for the divine blessing. If then, my hearers, there is any over whose wanderings you mourn, it will not be enough merely to *wish* their peace; it will not be sufficient merely to *pray*, even night and day, for the divine mercy on their behalf; to your prayers you must add your exertions, and your duty will not be half done till you meet them face to face, and "*reason*" with them on those things that concern their eternal peace. You must set before them the value of the soul—the tender mercy of the Father—the all-importance of the Redeemer's salvation; you must press on their minds the evil of sin—the vanities of time—the unsatisfactoriness of the world—the awfulness of a judgment-day, and the dread realities of a coming eternity; in short, you must use all the ar-

gments that Scripture and reason can suggest, and with all the love, and all the faithfulness, and all the prudence in your power, urge these arguments on them, as motives to seek the Lord ere it be too late. It is only by acting thus that your prayers for your friends will be heard; and in no other way will you be able to shake your garments free from their blood. So acted Paul when he stood before Felix. Such was the style of Paul's preaching.

II. Let us now consider what were the topics on which he thus preached.

These topics are two—faith and practice; and what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. Faith is here put first, and practice last, and justly, for faith is the only basis on which true practice can stand; it is the only spring from which pure, heavenly, spiritual morality can flow.

First, "he spake concerning the faith in Christ"—that is, the christian faith, or the Gospel scheme, of which Christ is at once both the author and the subject. Man, he would tell him, is guilty of having violated the law. In consequence of this violation, he has brought down upon himself the sentence of death—the death of the body, the death of the soul, and the death of both for ever. Vain would it be (he would remind him) to rely for deliverance on the general mercy of God, and vainer still to build a hope of pardon on his repentance for the past, or his amendment for the future. The security of the divine government—the happiness of the world at large—the faithfulness, justice, and even goodness of God, call aloud for the punishment of the transgressor. So great is this necessity, that unless a substitute can be found possessing a life of his own to offer, almighty power to sustain the burden of a world's guilt, and infinite dignity to give to his sufferings a requisite value and efficacy; unless, we say, such a substitute can be found, there is no alternative but that man must bear the doom his guilt has merited. But where can *such* a substitute be found? Search among the fallen race of Adam, but none such is there; search among the sons of the mighty around the throne above, but none such is there; search the wide universe, but you will find no *created* being in heaven, or in earth, or under the earth, able to open "the book of salvation with the seven seals." But "weep not," says the Gospel, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed!" "God so loved the world, as to send his only begot-

ten Son, that in his life we might have an example, by his death a sacrifice for sin, and by his ascension all power might be obtained to bestow blessings on our head." And, now that our Redeemer liveth, there is in his fulness a rich supply of all things necessary for our welfare in this world, and in that which is to come; and the blessings of his grace are free to men of every age, and character, and condition—even to the chief of sinners; and, in order to their enjoyment, we are called only to believe in his name—only to trust in his word, for the fulfilment of his promise—only to look up to him, with reliance on his power and faithfulness, for mercy to pardon, and grace to help us, in every time of need. Such is an outline of "the faith in Christ," concerning which the Apostle spake; and if we are anxious about the welfare of a single soul, let us remember that nothing but this blessed Gospel can ever prove "the power of God unto salvation." It is an important fact—too important to be here passed over—that, for many long years, the Moravian Missionaries had laboured in Greenland, but all to no purpose. They began by instructing the ignorant natives in the principles of *natural* religion—the existence of God—the creation of the world—the government of all things by a Providence; but no success attended their efforts. All was vain till they came to speak of Jesus: then their attention was arrested, and the first tear was seen to trickle down their cheeks; and then, for the first time, their hearts, which before were cold as the snows on which they trod, were warmed with the rays of divine love; and, at the sight of a crucified Redeemer, there then arose, amidst the icy mountains of Greenland, to the throne of the eternal, the song of "Moses and the Lamb." Yes, Christ crucified is the power of God unto salvation!

But as the sick man will never send for the physician till he is aware of his danger, so the sinner will never betake himself to the covert of redeeming blood, till he become sensible of his lost and sinful condition. The Apostle, therefore, not only preached the Gospel; he also proclaimed the law. He conducted Felix, if I may so speak, along the foot of Sinai, that after having heard the thunders of a broken law, he might welcome with greater gladness the peace-speaking voice of Calvary.

"He reasoned," it is said, "of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come."

“ Righteousness,” you know, consists in the observance of what man owes to man. No topic could be more appropriate on the present occasion, for Felix was notoriously cruel, and unjust, and oppressive in his government—to such a degree, that, at the complaint of the Jewish nation, he was recalled to Rome, where, with difficulty, he escaped a sentence of perpetual banishment. No doubt the Apostle would lay before him those duties that are incumbent on rulers. A lofty station in society, he would tell him, does not tolerate those vices that religion condemns, nor does it dispense with those duties that religion requires in the humblest sphere of life—that, though raised above his fellow-men, yet he that wears a crown, is but the servant of the Lord of Hosts, whose laws he is bound to obey, and whose character, as the world’s governor, he is bound to imitate—that the prince is not exalted to a throne, nor does he get his exchequer filled by the hard-wrought industry of his subjects, merely for the gratification of his ambition, or vanity, or lust, but for the welfare of the community, that he may be a “ praise to the good, and a terror to those that do evil”—that the blessings or the deep-drawn curses of a nation will fall on its ruler’s head, according as he acts the father or the tyrant of his people; and, in fine, he would warn him, that though a nation’s curse should never visit him on the earth—though he should live and die amid the praises of his fluttering courtiers—yet, when he came to resign his crown to God, who gave it, then there would be a reckoning according to his deeds.

But were Paul in the midst of us—though he would find no kings, yet there

are many with whom, and in like manner, he would “ reason of righteousness.” Most of us are engaged in the commercial pursuits of life, and in all our bargains we are called to be just—in all our engagements to be faithful—and in all our dealings to do to others as we would have them to do to us. Now, is there any who cannot open his account-books—who cannot meet in the face those with whom he is connected in business—who cannot lay his hand on his conscience, without being reminded that he acts otherwise? Then to such we would say, You call yourself a Christian, but to this name you have no title; for he that taketh undue advantage over his neighbour, is destitute of love; and it is written, “ Whosoever loveth not his brother, is not of God.” Nor will it in the least lessen your guilt, to plead that these practices are common in the course of trade, and that without them it would be impossible for business to be carried on; for, however lightly they may be thought of by men, they are all loudly condemned in the Word of God—which commands us to “do justly, and love mercy.” And aware of this, as you must be, how can you dare to supplicate the divine blessing on your unjust gains? or what peace of mind can you expect in their enjoyment? Perhaps on this point, however, you are easy, and think that all is safe, because no human eye is upon you; but have you forgotten that all your ways are manifest before that God with whom you have to do, and in the presence of that conscience that, ere long, will speak out? And though here you may live a life of envied prosperity, yet hereafter you cannot escape what is written against those who make the “ shekel great and the ephah small, and falsify balances by deceit.”

(To be concluded in our next.)

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SATURDAY, 19TH APRIL, 1834.

No. 108.

SERMON by the Rev. WILLIAM AULD, Jun., Tollcross.
SERMON by the Rev. DAVID SIMPSON, A.M., Aberdeen.

PAUL'S REASONING BEFORE FELIX;

A Sermon preached by the Rev. WILLIAM AULD, Jun.—Concluded.

But, in reasoning of "righteousness," we may take a wider range than this. We are all members of the great family of man; and our poor brethren we are bound to relieve, the ignorant to instruct, the wretched to comfort, the benighted to save. And is there any who, from his abundant table, can spare nothing for the starving family in his neighbourhood? Is there any who can be arrayed in all the fineries of fashionable dress, and yet have no compassion on the poor old man that passes the window shivering in the blast? Is there any who can sit by the blazing fireside, and rest on a bed of down, and yet drive from his gate, in the dark and stormy night, the houseless wanderer? Is there any who can come up to the house of God on the peaceful Sabbath morning, and yet, when reminded of those on whom no Sabbath dawns, and to whom no sanctuary opens its gates, refuse to send the Bible and the missionary to cheer, and to instruct, and to save? With such we would reason; and we would say to them, You are deaf to the voice of humanity, as well as to the voice of God. You show no mercy to your fellow-men, and how can you expect, since Scripture forbids it, mercy at the hands of your Maker! You seem, too, to have forgotten that all your goods, temporal or spiritual, are but a *loan* intrusted to you, not for your benefit merely, but for the benefit of the human race. And though this truth may be neglected, nay, though it

may be despised on the earth, yet it will be acted on at the day of judgment; and then it will be found, that he only who has "visited the sick, clad the naked, taken the stranger to his house, given his bread to the hungry, and a cup of water to the thirsty," shall receive the welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

There are, however, closer and more sacred relationships of life, to which in like manner we may apply the rule of righteousness—I mean the domestic; and, passing over all other members of a family, I would address *parents* who of all the rest have the most solemn duties to perform. Parents, you have brought into the world beings that will be happy or miserable for ever; and, whilst you educate them for this world, affection, religion, and your baptismal vow, call on you not to forget their education for the next. And do we address any who are deaf to this call? We do not mean those who, by their idleness and intemperance, leave their children unfed, unclad, and uneducated; alas! these are seldom to be found within the reach of a preacher's voice; it is those we mean who are carefully training up their children in those habits of diligence, and regularity, and economy, which are necessary to fit them for the life which now is, but who never once direct their attention to the life which is to come; in whose dwellings the voice of prayer and the melody of psalms are never heard, and who suffer their children to

grow up as if they had no God to serve, and no soul to save. With such, and we fear their number is by no means small in our Sabbath assemblies, we are loudly called to reason of righteousness. Your offspring, let it never be forgotten, are committed to your care to be educated for God, and trained up for immortality. You condemn the poor being that neglects the temporal well-being of his family: he has, indeed, "denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel;" but what name, appropriate enough, do you reserve for yourselves? The poor man you thus reprobate—what has he done? Why, he has only starved the body of his child; he has only murdered the body of his child, and perhaps brought that body to an untimely grave. But what have you done? You have starved the immortal *part*, you have murdered the precious soul; and, oh! the first death is nothing in comparison of the second, where all is weeping and wailing, and "no more any sacrifice for sin for ever!" Oh! I beseech you to reflect! How will you be able to leave behind you in the hour of death your unrenewed and unsanctified charge? how will you be able to gaze on their despair, when you meet them at the place of judgment? and of all in outer woe, you will flee farthest from the curses of your children, you will seek the darkest corner of hell, and there you will drink the deepest agony; and as the cursed pass by they will point the finger, and say, "Yonder is a murderer—a *parent* who murdered his child—a *murderer of its soul*!"

But the second class of duties concerning which the Apostle reasoned, was "temperance," or the right government of the passions and the appetites: and whilst righteousness respects those duties we owe to others, temperance has reference to those duties we owe to ourselves. Nor was this topic less appropriate than the former; for Felix not only was unjust in his government, but also addicted to sensuality and lust; and the woman called "his wife" was one whose husband was still living, and whom Felix had seduced from her conjugal allegiance. No doubt the Apostle would remind him that the "pure in heart alone can see God," that nothing that defileth or worketh abomination shall stand in the presence of the Eternal. Like John the Baptist, when before Herod on a similar occasion, he would warn him that it was not lawful to have another's wife; and that "because of these

things came the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

But though, in the présent audience, there be none chargeable with offences of this sort, yet there are many other crimes common amongst us, respecting which the preacher is often called to reason of "temperance." Is it not a fact, that there are some that can come up to the house of God on the peaceful Sabbath morning, scarcely recovered from the debauchery of the Saturday evening, and who have the courage to take into their lips that holy name which a few hours before they profaned in their songs of midnight revelry? Yes; these are still, in many instances, called Christians; they find little difficulty in getting their children baptized, and, awful profanation! they are allowed to take into their hands the bread and the wine of the Holy Sacrament. With such we would reason, and with a kindly but warning voice we would tell them, that of all the vices in this wicked world there is none so small in its beginning, so gradual and unperceived in its progress, yet so destructive in its consequences. Not only does it ruin the health, ruin the industry, ruin the fortune, ruin the character, ruin our peace, ruin our family, but what is far worse, it weakens the memory, it darkens the mind, it hardens the heart, it stupifies the conscience, it unfitst for religious duties, it makes its poor victim regardless about the law of God and the opinion of men, it makes him unconcerned how he lives, and reckless how he dies. Say not, if we are speaking to any such, that it is but on rare occasions you go to excess. So said many whose prospects were once fair as yours. Once we regarded them as travellers to Zion; but now we weep to see how, step by step, they have thrown aside all religion and all decency, and now go about forsaken of men, and, as it were, accursed of God—go about like fallen angels that once were glorious, and are left as beacons amid the desolation of the waters, to warn us of those rocks on which they have made shipwreck. Little may this vice be condemned among men, and the poor wretch as he staggers along the street may excite the laughter rather than the pity of the passers by; but it is ranked amid the vilest vices that darken the page of Scripture; and on the last page of revelation, among the last sayings of the last prophet, just as he was leaving the earth, he turned round and said, "The drunkard shall not inherit the king-

dom of God." Yes! he shall have an inheritance, but it is in that place where though he thirst for the wine, the red wine as it stirreth itself in the cup, not a drop of water shall be given to quench his thirst.

There are many other characters with whom in like manner we may reason of "temperance;" but at present we have only a few words to say to the *worldling*, who, perhaps, in his character, comprises all the rest. The worldling is one who lives in the world as if he never were to leave it. Amidst the bounties of Providence he never thinks of the giver; amidst the fluctuations of time he gives himself no concern about the approach of eternity: in short, he lives as if he had no soul to save, as if God and religion were all a fable, as if there were no heaven above and no hell beneath. Stopping such a one in his career of folly, we would say, be temperate in earth-born pursuits—make not the immortal soul the drudge of your body; and, for the pleasures of a short passing hour, barter not your eternal peace. Remember what you are—you are a being that shall never die. And whither are you going? to eternity! And what preparation are you making for that long journey? none—absolutely none! True, you are never idle: you are ever "pulling down your barns and building greater." But what will this avail thee in the hour that thy soul shall be required of thee? Will it do away the terrors of the last enemy, or appease the wrath of Him that sitteth on the throne, or open for thee the gates of immortality? Ah! no. As Johnson once said to Garrick, when the latter was showing him a fine estate which he had lately purchased, "It is this which renders death terrible." Yes! these things will only aggravate your doom and increase your eternal misery. Once more we beseech such to be temperate in earth-born pursuits. Remember what you are—you are a sinner lost; and what, if you continue as you are, you must shortly become—a sinner *lost, lost, lost for ever!*

But the last topic, and which he employed as an argument to enforce his reasonings on righteousness and temperance, was, "the judgment to come." It is obvious, from many considerations, that this is but the infancy of our being. Soon the youngest in this assembly shall breath his last; then he shall be wrapped in his shroud! A day after that he shall be covered up in the dark coffin; a few days more and he shall be

carried to the sepulchre of his fathers. But where all the while has the *spirit* gone? it is the body only that was wrapped in the shroud, that was covered up in the coffin, that was laid in the grave; whither has that spirit fled which defies the stroke of death, which shall live when the sun shall be extinguished, and all nature be dissolved? Whither has that spirit gone? It departed with the last breath; it has risen above the horizon of things seen and temporal; naked and disembodied, it has been ushered into the presence of the Eternal, there to give in its account! Here a law was given it, there it will be asked how that law has been obeyed: talents were here committed to its care, there it will be inquired what use was made of them: in this world a vineyard was given it to cultivate, and in the next the fruit will be sought for. And though the sinner here may escape the visitation of wrath—though he may be praised by an unthinking world when he lives, and be honoured by it when he dies, yet on that day appointed for winding up the affairs of this earth the sentence of men shall be reversed, and the individual shall receive according to his deeds. It is seldom we think of that day—that last day—that day of the Lord—that day of days—that day for which all other days were made; and if sometimes we direct our thoughts to that awful day when time shall end and eternity begin, how often is the voice of conscience drowned amidst the noise and bustle of the world! Yet on that day when the sinner's eyes shall be opened to behold the judgment-seat and Him that sits thereon, then conscience, no longer asleep, shall speak in thunders louder than the crash of falling worlds, and more awful than the blast of the archangel's trumpet! Then, it will recall to his mind the Sabbaths, the sermons, and the sacraments on earth he has despised; and, methinks, among other things his thoughts will revert to the place where we are now met. And as he remembers how the ~~preacher~~ this day reasoned of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment" to come, the voice of conscience will thunder in his ear, "You knew your duty, but you did it not!" And when driven away from the judgment-seat, and when passing through the wide open gates of woe, and when lying down amidst the weeping, and cursing, and woe that are there, still the same voice again, louder and still louder, shall proclaim in his

ears, " You knew your duty, but you did it not!" And when he sees across the gulph Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, and hears the songs of the ransomed multitude coming down from the gates of heaven, then the voice of his sleepless conscience, again and again, shall for ever proclaim, " You might have been saved, but you would not! You might have stood in yonder throng, you might had joined in yonder anthem! You knew your duty, but you did it not!"

III. The *effect* which this sermon produced.

That sermon is worthless which does not reach the heart; and that heart must have been hard, indeed, that could have withstood the reasoning of an inspired Apostle, and on such important subjects. He felt—but was it grief for his past sin? was it hope in the divine mercy? was it reliance on the power and faithfulness of Him who is able to save unto the uttermost? No! It was not grief for sin, but terror on account of its punishment; it was not that godly sorrow which calms and purifies the heart, but the foretaste of despair which rages in outer woe. " He trembled." The Apostle had entered with the candle of the Lord into the recesses of his bosom, and disclosed all those images of wickedness which, with all the cowardice of conscious guilt, Felix had striven to conceal from himself; and so vividly did Paul portray the doings of that day when the books shall be opened and the judgment set, that Felix was made to feel as if it had already arrived—as if he had seen the Judge make bare his holy arm, and heard that sentence pronounced which should doom him to eternal despair. And, neither the sophistry of a deceitful heart, nor the suggestions of the wicked one, nor the fatal influence of Drusilla, nor the flattering speeches of Tertullus, nor the pomp and splendour of his office as the viceroy of the Roman Emperor—not one nor all of these things could pacify the fears of his guilty awakened conscience. " He trembled," like the meanest criminal that ever stood at his own tribunal; " he trembled," like the benighted traveller, when all on a sudden the lightning discloses the awful precipice on whose brink he is approaching; " he trembled," like the man under sentence of death, when in his cell at the midnight

hour he hears the knocking of the hammer erecting the scaffold on which he is to die on the morrow; " he trembled"—his countenance was changed, his thoughts troubled him, his knees smote against each other like Belshazzar, when he saw the hand-writing on the wall that proclaimed his days to be numbered, and his kingdom to be departed from him; " he trembled"—but who can describe the fears of a guilty conscience brooding over its woes—

Unfit for earth, undoomed for heaven,
Darkness above, despair beneath,
Around it flame, within it death?

These impressions on the mind of Felix were the result of God's Spirit; and if Felix had acted right, he ought to have humbled himself under the mighty hand of God, and sought for pardon and mercy through faith in that Christ of whom the Apostle spake to him. But these salutary impressions were but of short duration: like one suddenly awakened out of his sleep, he felt a moment's alarm; but, with that infatuation common to fallen humanity, he again folded his arms to slumber. Could the Apostle have told him how he could be happy without requiring to be holy—how he might escape hell and enjoy earth—how he might be delivered from the curse denounced against his sins, but left in the enjoyment of the sins themselves, gladly would Felix have listened to his message. But since the Apostle could preach no Gospel but that which proclaimed salvation not *in* sin but *from* sin; since the Apostle could promise a happiness only flowing from and parallel with holiness, what did the poor infatuated Felix resolve to do? He dismisses the preacher, but retains his Drusilla; he clings to the pleasures of sin which are but for a moment, but he parts with his eternal salvation: to the message, to the messenger of God, to God himself, he says, " Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee!" But we never read that that convenient season ever came; he never, as far as we learn, sent for Paul again, at least to hear the Gospel preached; and the next time that Felix trembled was, we have reason to fear, in that place where there is weeping, and " trembling," and woe, without ceasing and without rest for ever. Amen.

THE APOSTOLIC INJUNCTION "TO ABSTAIN FROM ALL APPEAR-
ANCE OF EVIL," CONSIDERED AS A SCRIPTURAL WARRANT
FOR TEMPERANCE SOCIETIES;

A Sermon preached by the Rev. ANDREW SIMPSON, A.M.—Concluded.

My second observation is, that spirit-drinking is attended with a very great and unnecessary expense. There are very few who have any idea of the enormous sum of money that is annually expended in Great Britain and Ireland on spirituous liquors. Indeed, it is almost incredible, and ought to make every Christian blush to the very soul. It has been ascertained by an examination of public documents, that about **TWENTY MILLIONS** sterling are every year paid for spirits by the inhabitants of this country. Tell it not in infidel France or popish Spain! publish it not in the streets of Paris or Madrid, that in Protestant Britain—Britain with all its Bibles, and all its churches, and all its schools—Britain, with all its light and knowledge, and all its boasted ascendancy over other nations, wastes away such a sum on liquids which are totally unnecessary for promoting health of body or cheerfulness of mind, which, on the contrary, are preying on our very vitals, and threatening us with utter destruction! Conceal from them, if possible, the disgraceful fact, lest they triumph in our infatuation, and exult in the prospect of our speedy downfall. But it is vain to attempt to hide our shame! Our intemperance is known over the whole world. Our soldiers and sailors proclaim it wherever they go. Our newspapers make it known in every country to which they are sent.

Now, let us consider what a blessing the one-half, or the one-fourth, or the one-twentieth of this sum would be, if it were devoted to the scriptural education of those who are perishing for lack of knowledge, and to the diffusion of divine truth throughout the land and throughout the world. What a mighty impulse would be given to our societies for the promotion of the temporal and eternal welfare of our fellow-men, if four or five millions sterling were annually divided amongst them! Why, there would not be a child in the country that would not be taught to read his Bible, and receive the

elements of a useful education; there is not a district nor a corner in Britain that would not be furnished with religious instructors; and there is not a nation nor tribe on earth that would not soon be provided with Bibles and missionaries to declare to them the glad tidings of a Saviour's grace. But if we are to judge of the relative value which as a nation we set upon the Gospel and upon spirituous liquors, we must affirm that our love for ardent spirits is thirty or forty times stronger than our love for the Gospel. The sums contributed to the support of all our great religious institutions do not exceed £500,000, which are only *one-fortieth* part of the sum we give for spirituous liquors. Now, is there any one, who has any pretences to the christian character, who will deny that there is the *appearance* of evil here?

But, perhaps, it may be said, that it is the drunken part of the population that squander away by far the greater proportion of this sum, and that, therefore, the comparison which we have instituted is not a fair one. This objection, however, is not well-founded. The moderate drinkers, those who call themselves so at least, consume a much greater quantity of spirits than the drunkards. For one person that is notoriously intemperate, there are at least ten, probably a much greater proportion, who take spirits in moderation. There cannot be a doubt, therefore, that of the twenty millions of pounds spent on this article the far greater part is contributed by the moderate drinkers. Let every one now ask himself, To what extent am *I* involved in the charge of giving thirty or forty shillings for intoxicating liquors, for every one I give for promoting the honour of God, and the eternal welfare of my fellow-men? Let me consider. "How much do I give to Bible, Missionary, and Tract Societies?" This is a point, which I think most of us will be able to ascertain without much difficulty. "Well; how much now do I ex-

pend in the course of a year on strong drink?" This, perhaps, is a point which you cannot so easily determine. The occasions of drinking are so frequent you cannot exactly say. Make, then, the nearest approach to the truth you can, and tell me, ye who moderately, but regularly drink spirits, whether your expenditure for them be not much greater than your contributions for the general diffusion of divine truth? And if it be so, is there not in this, I ask you, the *appearance of evil*?

But, perhaps, it may be urged in opposition to what I have stated, that there are many things for which you must necessarily give more money than for the propagation of the Gospel; and that, therefore, it is unfair to judge of your value for it by such a standard. But let it be observed, that I do not speak of the sums required to obtain the necessaries of life, but of your voluntary contributions for religious institutions and for spirituous liquors. You surely will not venture to say that ardent spirits are a necessary of life which you cannot want, and that, therefore, you are perfectly warranted to lay out so much of your substance in the purchase of them! What! will you dare to hold up your faces before the God of heaven and say, that you have done right in devoting more money to spirituous liquors than to the propagation of the Gospel, and that your health and comfort would have been seriously impaired if you had consumed less of the former and contributed more liberally to the latter? And if conscience would not allow you to utter such a declaration, must you not acknowledge, that there is in your conduct, in this respect at least, the *appearance of evil*? The spirits you use in the course of a year cost you, perhaps, three, or five, or ten, or twenty pounds. Now, if this expenditure be utterly unnecessary; if it has no tendency to promote your real welfare either in this world or in the world to come; if you would be as well or better without such a consumption of ardent spirits, must you not admit, that you have been guilty of a criminal waste of your property, and that you have deprived yourselves to this extent of the ability to promote the glory of God and the good of your fellow-creatures? And if it be a scriptural injunction that, "whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we should do all to the glory of God," are you not doing evil in his sight when you spend

in an unnecessary gratification that which might be applied to the most important and useful purposes.

But, perhaps, you will endeavour to evade the charge of guilt, by asserting that it is not an unnecessary gratification which you derive from spirituous liquors—that they refresh and strengthen you after the fatigues of the day, and inspire you with a degree of cheerfulness which you would not otherwise possess. Now, I am most thoroughly convinced by the solemn declarations of a host of the most able and enlightened physicians, by my own experience, and by the recorded experience of all who have honestly put this matter to the test, that the grossest delusion prevails in the public mind with regard to the virtues of ardent spirits; that they are totally destitute of the good qualities ascribed to them; that, on the contrary, they have properties which render them most pernicious and destructive; that thousands and tens of thousands have proceeded by a regular gradation from the moderate to the immoderate use of them; that the welfare of the community would be exceedingly promoted, if they were entirely and universally abandoned; that ignorance, and poverty, and crime, and insanity, and misery, which they produce in a tenfold greater degree than all other causes combined, would be vastly diminished, and that, consequently, some of the most powerful obstacles that prevent the diffusion of divine truth would be removed. For a long period it has been taken for granted, that ardent spirits combine in themselves every excellence that can render any thing precious and desirable. Their praises have been celebrated both in prose and verse; and, certainly, we need no stronger proof of the estimation in which they are held than the prodigious quantity of them that is consumed. But the real character, and tendencies, and effects of these liquids, have lately been clearly exposed, and it has been fully proved, that never did Satan more successfully transform himself into an angel of light than when he succeeded in throwing so many attractions around ardent spirits as to persuade men that they were an exceedingly valuable and useful article, and that the use of them would greatly promote their health and comfort. Eleven hundred thousand persons in America and this country have subjected their supposed virtues to the test of experiment, by renouncing the

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use of them altogether, and they have found that they are not necessary for any good purpose ; that their health, instead of being injured, has been improved since they connected themselves with a Temperance Society ; that they can perform more work, and endure more fatigue without spirits than with them ; and that their mental vigour is greatly increased and their real comfort exceedingly promoted. They have expressed their amazement at the delusion under which they formerly laboured with regard to the real nature of those liquors which they once used ; and they have declared their deep convictions, that they are the chief cause of the disease, immorality and wretchedness that so generally prevail. Now, if these things be true, they constitute a *grand and most important discovery*—a discovery more closely connected with the happiness of the human race, than any that has been made in modern times. If it can be satisfactorily proved, that ardent spirits are of no use whatever, except very rarely as a medicine ; that they have a direct tendency to render all intemperate who are accustomed to partake of them ; that they consume twenty millions of money annually—a sum which might be most beneficially employed in promoting the temporal and spiritual welfare of the community, and which has been reckoned by the British Parliament a sufficient ransom for 800,000 slaves ; and that vigour of body and soundness of mind would be greatly increased by the entire disuse of them ; then, surely, all who are desirous of advancing the best interests of their fellow-men should combine to banish them from their houses, to banish them from their tables, to stamp them with the brand of deserved infamy, and to endeavour to persuade all over whom they have any influence entirely to relinquish them ! What good, I would ask, has the use of spirits done to the people of this country in comparison to the prodigious evils which it has inflicted on them ? The one bears no more proportion to the other than a drop does to the ocean ! We have been for many years subjecting ourselves to a growing expense for these liquors, and now the sum we pay for them amounts to nearly one-half of the whole revenue of Great Britain. And of this most disgraceful expenditure, Scotland bears a very large proportion. If we take the number of gallons of whisky consumed in this northern

part of the island, and divide it by the whole population, man, woman, and child, we will find that every one of them pays on an average twenty-five shillings a-year for this article, and that all together spend upwards of three millions sterling upon it ! What are we to think of such an enormous expenditure for whisky as this ? Is it necessary ? is it justifiable ? Neither the one nor the other ! It is one of the foulest blots on the character of our nation ; and the moderate men, by whom principally this immense sum is expended, have a very large share in the guilt which we have thus contracted. Permit me, then, to ask you, whether you are not bound seriously and honestly to *make the experiment*, if you can be healthy and comfortable without the use of spirits ? If you can, (and if you entirely, and for a sufficient time abstain from them, I have not the slightest doubt of it,) then surely you are chargeable with very aggravated guilt if you waste away on an unnecessary and dangerous indulgence that which might be applied in a variety of ways to promote your real welfare, and the best interests of your fellow-men. But if you should come to the conclusion, that you cannot want spirits, then, I beseech you, think in what a deplorable condition you are placed ! You have so accustomed yourselves to the stimulus of strong drink, that you think you cannot do without it. There is, therefore, very great reason indeed to fear, that you will ultimately become intemperate. You have contracted that love for spirituous liquors, which has proved the ruin of thousands, and which, in all probability, will conduct you to perdition also. Every one who has adopted the opinion that spirits are necessary for him, displays one of the most alarming symptoms of approaching drunkenness ; and if he does not deliberately resolve to be undone, he should instantly abandon them. Let him be assured that his judgment is perverted by his inclination ; that he is labouring under a fatal error with regard to the qualities of these liquors ; that he has just arrived at that stage in the use of them, where, if they are not resolutely and completely renounced, they will obtain an uncontrollable ascendancy over him, and hurry him to that horrible dungeon, which drunkenness has prepared for all her victims : let him contemplate those who are steady and consistent members of Temperance Societies, and let him observe whether

their health is not as good as his; whether they are not as capable of labour and fatigue as he; whether they do not enjoy as much comfort in their families; whether they are not as cheerful when engaged in their employments; whether they are not in every way as respectable in their station, nay more, whether they do not possess all the elements of happiness in a much greater proportion than he. Were he calmly and attentively to survey the effects which have been produced by Temperance Societies, he would find that their members, instead of suffering any inconvenience or hardship, or any diminution of comfort, are more happy than ever they were before; that the money which they formerly expended on spirits they now employ in procuring decent and comfortable clothing, solid and nutritious food, convenient articles of furniture, instructive and entertaining books, suitable education for their children, and a seat in the house of God. He would perceive that tradesmen who were formerly always in debt, now pay every man his own, and purchase their necessaries for ready money; that they are able to assist their indigent relations, to give something to the poor, and to throw in a contribution to the treasury of the Gospel. And what is the secret of this wonderful change? What is it that has afforded them the means of doing so much good? They have denied themselves the use of spirituous liquors, and thus they have saved their money to a much greater amount than they could have formerly believed, and they have saved their time, which they have converted into more money; and, what is far more important, they have gained a victory over a "fleshy lust which warred against their souls."

Let, then, moderate men calculate how much they annually spend on spirits, and let them seriously propose this question to their consciences, Is there not the appearance of evil in wasting away so much money on a gratification, which, we are assured, by hundreds of thousands who have made the experiment, is altogether unnecessary, and exceedingly dangerous? and would it not be much more becoming our professed christian character, and much more profitable, to devote the sum which we hitherto spent in this manner to the promotion of the temporal interests of our fellow-creatures?

3d. I observe that the moderate drinking

of spirits has the appearance of evil, because it gives encouragement to those who drink them to excess. It is well known that whenever we attempt to reprove the intemperate, they remind us that there are many who are never found fault with, who reckon spirituous liquors a source of great enjoyment, and who in the course of a year consume as great a quantity as they. It is only occasionally, they remark, that we can obtain them, but your moderate men are perpetually using them, and if you make a calculation, you will find that there is not much difference between us in regard to the quantity consumed, nay, you will discover that not a few moderate men drink a great deal more in a year than some notorious drunkards. Now, what reply are the moderate drinkers of spirits able to make to this statement? Why the very common one that the abuse of a thing is no argument against its use. Now, we are ready to admit the full force of this remark, when it is applied to things which are necessary and safe, and that if others partake of these things to excess, this is no reason why we should not partake of them in moderation. This rule may be applied to all kinds of nourishing food and of harmless and refreshing liquids. A certain portion of these articles is *necessary* for us, and may be safely enjoyed; and we are not bound to abandon the use of them, because some are so foolish and wicked as to abuse them. But then we affirm most decidedly, and we think we can prove most satisfactorily, that spirits are neither a necessary nor safe article of ordinary consumption. They are certainly not necessary, because we can want them without suffering the least injury; nay, our health is more vigorous and our minds more cheerful when we do not use them at all. They are not safe, because, when their stimulating quality is diminished, as it always is by frequent use, we are subjected to the strongest temptations to take a greater and a greater quantity of them—a temptation to which multitudes of moderate drinkers have yielded, and by which they have been undone. There are, perhaps, some opponents of Temperance Societies who are candid enough to admit the accuracy of the statement which we have now made—that the use of spirits is neither necessary nor safe. Why, then, we ask, do you not immediately renounce them? Is it not a plain and palpable sin to indulge yourselves in any bodily gratification which

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is neither necessary nor safe? Is it not a plain and palpable sin to give any portion of your substance for an article of this nature? Is it not a plain and palpable sin to persist in any practice by which you may make others suppose, or confirm them in the belief, that it is both necessary and safe? If you are convinced that it is neither necessary nor safe to drink spirits, then our point is gained, and you are bound by every principle of duty to abandon them.

But herein lies the great difficulty with which we have to contend. The people of this country have been so long accustomed to the agreeable stimulus of ardent spirits, and they have become so associated in their minds with occasions of festivity and merriment, that they are exceedingly reluctant to believe any ill of them; and when we endeavour to make them acquainted with their real properties, they are almost ready to accuse us of bearing false witness against one of the good creatures of God. Hence we meet with so many who declare that spirits are necessary for them, and that they could not safely give up the use of them. But we beg leave to remind such persons that this is a point which can only be ascertained by experiment, and that the question at issue is of so great importance, that they are bound to make that experiment. The members of Temperance Societies, who have put this matter to the test, declare, with one voice, that spirits are no more necessary for them than for the inferior animals; and I have not the least doubt that any one who discontinues the use of them for six months will arrive at the same conclusion. Do we then require of you any great sacrifice, when we call upon you to make the trial? It cannot surely be attended with any danger to you; and if the result should be a conviction that your former practice was right, and that it would be injurious to you to renounce them, then you will have the consolation of reflecting that you have dealt honestly with the important question respecting Temperance Societies, and that you have taken some trouble to ascertain whether they are worthy of your support; but if, on the contrary, the issue should be a persuasion that you have not the least need for spirituous liquors, and that you are better in every respect without them, then you will be able to apply the money spent on them to other purposes of a

more beneficial nature, and you will have it in your power to exert a most beneficial influence in persuading others to go and do likewise.

There are others, again, who allow that spirits cannot be safely taken by the generality of mankind, but who think that they have resolution and firmness of mind sufficient to enable them to resist their insidious properties, and to prevent them from even passing the boundaries of moderation, and that, therefore, as they are fond of the excitement which a small portion of this article produces, they may warrantably use it. Now, I must take the liberty of stating, that I think this self-confidence one of the most alarming indications of their danger, and of reminding them of the declaration of the inspired volume, that "he who trusteth in his own heart is a fool." I would entreat them, also, to consider how many persons possessed of as great energy of mind, and as great respectability of character as they, have transgressed the limits which they once prescribed to themselves, and which they resolved never to pass over, and have become openly and disgracefully intemperate.

But I shall admit, for the sake of argument, that you do possess so much strength of mind and so much religious principle that no bad consequences can flow to yourselves from the moderate quantity of spirits which you usually take. But if some of your fellow-men, who have not so much strength of mind and who are much more easily led astray, derive encouragement from your example, to indulge in the use of these liquors to excess, do you suppose that you are altogether free from blame? Have you no regard for the case of the young, and the thoughtless, and the ignorant, who may be persuaded to tamper with this article, and who may soon form a ruinous desire for it? Is not this a case in which it is clearly your duty to exercise christian self-denial, and to renounce a personal gratification which is by no means necessary to you, when you find that, by indulging in it, you encourage many of your fellow-creatures to persist in their intemperate habits? How did the apostle Paul act when he was placed in similar circumstances? Did he resolve to continue to eat flesh and drink wine when he found that he would thereby lay a snare for the consciences of his weak brethren, and em-

bolden them to do that which they thought to be unlawful? No; though it was perfectly allowable and perfectly safe for him to partake of both these articles in moderation, yet he declares that he would renounce the use of them for ever, rather than throw a stumblingblock in the way of those who were not so enlightened as himself, in regard to the subject of their christian liberty. And if the Apostle were living in the present day, and contemplated all the fatal consequences which result from the general use of distilled liquors, would not "his spirit be stirred within him," as when he saw the city of Athens wholly given to idolatry? And if he found that, by moderately using ardent spirits, he gave encouragement to others to drink intemperately, have we not the strongest reason to think, from his avowed principles, that he would resolve instantly to abandon them, that none might have the least shadow of pretence to suppose that he did not look upon their conduct with the greatest abhorrence? If he would abstain from flesh and wine, rather than do injury to the consciences of a few scrupulous Christians, would he not now refrain from spirituous liquors, even though they might be as safely used as the articles which we have just mentioned, if he found that, by partaking of them in the most moderate manner, he gave his sanction to a practice which, in innumerable instances, terminated in the temporal and eternal ruin of his fellow-men? Can there be any reasonable ground for doubt in regard to the manner in which he would have acted consistently with his avowed principles? Would he have still cleaved to an indulgence of this nature, when he considered what multitudes have proceeded from moderation to intemperance, and what an enormous amount of crime, poverty, and wretchedness, intemperance is continually producing? Would he have poured ridicule on those who honestly and zealously used the most effectual means which they could think of, in order to arrest the progress of so appalling an evil? Would he have stigmatized them as weak, though, perhaps, well-meaning persons, because they resolved to abstain from the use of spirituous liquors altogether, rather than give the least encouragement to any of their fellow-men to use them to their own destruction? On the contrary, have we not the strongest reason to believe that he would

have acknowledged that they were acting in perfect consistency with the principles which he himself had laid down, and that they were endeavouring to imitate the example which he had set before them?

But, in reply to every argument of this nature, we are told by many, "The small quantity of spirits which we take does us no harm, but affords us an agreeable stimulus, which is not without its use to our constitutions; we cannot, therefore, consent to deny ourselves so innocent a gratification." Permit me, then, to ask how you think you ought to act in the following case:—Suppose there was a certain article of food which you found to be grateful to your stomachs, when used in moderate quantities, but that it had the property of exciting a vehement desire in those who partook of it to obtain more of it; and suppose that vast numbers of those who used it had not the resolution to resist their craving appetite, but ate of it to excess, and that the invariable consequence of this was, that they were attacked with malignant cholera, and that a great proportion of them were cut off by that tremendous disease—would you, let me ask, in such circumstances, persist in the use of an article which you could very well want, and which, though harmless in the way you used it, was productive of such fatal effects to so many of your fellow-creatures, who could not be prevailed on to take it in moderation? Would you think it sufficient, on such an occasion, to warn them against the abuse of this article, when you knew very well that they *would* abuse it, and that they would not be persuaded that it was so very dangerous a thing while you continued daily to partake of it? You surely would not think that this was all that was required of you, and continue to eat this article as usual! You surely would come forward publicly, and enter your strongest protest against any participation of it, and declare that you would not taste it while the world stood, if it were to expose so many that partook of it to so awful a visitation! And would you not think that man deserving of the deepest reprobation, who preferred his own selfish indulgence to the preservation of multitudes of his fellow-creatures from so dreadful a calamity? I doubt not but that in such a case you would account it the only safe course to renounce the use of this species of food altogether, and that, while you continued to give it a

place on your tables, you could not expect that it would be excluded from the tables of the more ignorant part of our population. Perhaps, indeed, there are not a few who are so disgustingly selfish, that if they were assured cholera would not attack them, they would not be persuaded to abandon this article ; but when they are convinced that this disease, though it might commence with those who partook largely of this kind of food, would soon extend its ravages among the other classes of the community, they would feel it necessary, in self-defence, to take the most effectual methods of abolishing the use of it entirely.

Now, let me ask why you do not act in the same manner in regard to spirituous liquors ? Are they not exactly such an article as the supposed kind of food ? And though it were true, which I by no means admit, that you could with the greatest safety partake of them, yet, when you perceive that so many of your fellow-creatures cannot use them in moderation, but, by their intemperate indulgence in them, bring upon themselves swift destruction; is not this a sufficient reason why you should utterly abstain from them, and thus declare, in the most solemn and impressive way, your deep sense of the evils which they are continually producing ?

But perhaps some may assert that the effects of intemperance are not so awful as the effects of cholera ; and that, therefore, it is not reasonable that they should be expected to act in the same way in the former case as in the latter. Intemperance not so formidable or destructive as cholera !! Why, it is unspeakably more formidable and more destructive, and without its aid this frightful disease would be comparatively harmless. If all the poverty, all the ignorance, all the degradation, all the misery, all the crime, all the loss of life of which intemperance has been the cause were summed up, it would certainly be found that cholera has been but a slight calamity to this country in comparison with its intemperance. Cholera, indeed, has generally been more speedy in its operations than intemperance, and has, therefore, attracted more attention, but it is not on that account more fatal. Intemperance has for many years been carrying on its horrid work of death in every city, and town, and village in our land. It has been sapping the foundations of every thing that is

good and noble in the character of our population ; it has been diffusing indigence and wretchedness among thousands and tens of thousands of families, who might otherwise have lived in plenty and comfort ; it has broken the hearts of multitudes of parents, who might otherwise have rejoiced in a dutiful and affectionate offspring ; it has impelled multitudes to the commission of crime, who might have been respectable and valued members of society ; it has deprived many of reason, who would never have otherwise been subjected to so great a calamity ; it has reduced to the lowest state of degradation and misery vast multitudes who once occupied situations of the greatest respectability ; it has banished many from the house of God, who might otherwise have regularly heard the glad tidings of salvation ; it has hurried thousands unexpectedly into the presence of their righteous Judge, and plunged them into the abyss of everlasting perdition. If we are asked to produce our proofs of these assertions, we refer to the proceedings of our criminal courts, and to the records of our police offices ; we request you to visit our Jails, our Bridewells, our Lunatic Asylums, and inquire what it is that has furnished them with the greatest number of inmates ; we tell you to consult those who are most conversant with the state of the poor, and to ask them what they have found the most prevalent cause of their poverty, disease, and misery, and the result will be, that they will unite in declaring that intemperance is “ the chiefest of the chief causes ” of all the degradation, wretchedness, and crime that abound in our land.

If, then, as we have endeavoured to prove, the moderate use of spirits be altogether unnecessary either for health or comfort ; if it be a very insidious practice which, in innumerable instances, leads to intemperance ; if it be attended with a heavy expense, which might well be spared, and the money applied to the most valuable purposes ; if it gives the greatest encouragement to those who drink to excess, and inspires them with the falsest ideas of the nature of those liquids which are drowning both their souls and bodies in destruction and perdition ; if it has, in fact, been the means of converting multitudes, who were once sober, into debased and profligate drunkards ; and if, according to the evidence of our legislators, our judges, our magistrates, our physicians,

our ministers, our keepers of Jails, and ranted to say that it has the appearance of Bridewells, and Asylums, it is the cause of evil, and much more than the *appearance* of evil, and that, therefore, according to the not less than three-fourths of all the vices, outrages, and miseries, that come under their apostolic injunction, we are *bound* "to abstain from it."

THE SABBATH BELL.

THE Sabbath bell ! the Sabbath bell !
 To toil-worn men a soothing sound ;
 Now labour rests beneath its spell,
 And holy stillness reigns around :
 The ploughman's team, the thresher's flail,
 The woodman's axe, their clamours cease,
 And only nature's notes prevail,
 To humble bosoms echoing peace.

The Sabbath bell ! the Sabbath bell !
 How sweet on ears devout it falls ;
 While its sweet chime, with varying swell,
 The rich and poor to worship calls.
 Hark ! hark ! again with sharper peals
 It chides the laggard's fond delay ;
 Now through the vale it softly steals,
 To cheer the timely on their way.

The Sabbath bell ! the Sabbath bell !
 What soul-awakening sounds we hear ;
 Its blessed invitations tell
 Of welcome to the house of prayer.
 "Come, sinner, come," it seems to cry ;
 "O, never doubt thy Maker's love ;
 "Christ has thy ransom paid, then why
 "Delay his clemency to prove ?"

The Sabbath bell ! the Sabbath bell !
 Oft have we heard its warning chime,
 And yet we love the world too well,
 Nor feel our waywardness a crime :
 Yet still thy calls, sweet bell, repeat,
 Till, ended all our mortal strife,
 In hand-built shrines no more we meet,
 But worship in the realms of life.

The Sabbath bell ! the Sabbath bell !
 Its friendly summons peals no more ;
 The thronging crowds pour in with zeal
 The Great Jehovah to adore.
 Hence ! fancy wild, hence ! earth-born care ;
 With awe let hallowed courts be trod ;
 Wake all the soul to love and prayer,
 And reverence the present God !

R. M.

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THE
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SATURDAY, 26TH APRIL, 1834.

No. 109.

SERMON by the Rev. THOMAS GRAY, Aberdeen.
SERMON by the Rev. DAVID CARMENT, Ross-Keen.

Price 2d.

ON ORIGINAL SIN;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THE AFTERNOON OF SUNDAY, 9TH MARCH, 1834, IN ROXBURGH PLACE CHAPEL, EDINBURGH,

By the Rev. THOMAS GRAY,
Aberdeen.

"All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."—ROMANS iii. 23. *"By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners."*—ROMANS v. 19.

IN the natural, or in the moral world, there is not a fact more obvious and striking than the *depravity of human nature*. *Imperfection* is so stamped upon every faculty of the body and power of the mind, that we are doomed daily to detect and deplore errors in opinion, and defects in practice, which we often experience to be impossible to rectify in due season, and with complete success. From the ignorance and impiety incidental to youth, from those appetites and affections which form a large portion of our nature, errors in judgment unavoidably arise, which neither age, observation, nor experience, ever effectually remove. Not a few of these errors seem to overtake us at the very earliest period of existence; through every stage of our career they attend upon us with a closeness which has no parallel, and we at last drop from the scene of life without fully understanding the nature, or duly appreciating the value of half of those objects which have excited in us many an emotion of joy and of sorrow, and upon which our attention has been the most devotedly bestowed.

From those mistakes in judgment into which we are so prone to fall, from the vehemence of passion and the influence of corrupt example, spring those numerous omissions of duty, and positive acts of sin, of which every one is conscious in himself, and which he seldom fails to condemn in others. In whatever employments we are

engaged, whether in the bustle of business or the pursuit of pleasure, we are perpetually liable to the breach of those commandments which it is at once our duty and our interest to obey. When in the best of causes we exert ourselves with resolution and vigour, the merit of our actions is often impaired on account of the *motives* by which we are actuated; and if, through dread of falling into any dangerous mistake, we *refuse* to act, we incur the charge which was pronounced against the unfaithful steward for not improving the talent committed to his care. When we hear the most valuable instruction, we too often censure or disregard it, and for no better reason, perhaps, than that we dislike the instructor. In perusing a work of acknowledged talent and utility, we do not *always* derive advantage from the employment, in consequence either of the influence of party-spirit, or prejudice, or in forming our judgment from some erroneous principle of our own. In many cases imperfection presses upon us with a force which is *irresistible*. When we endeavour to raise our mind to the contemplation of Deity, we are seldom able for any considerable time to think *devoutly* upon the awful subject; and when we strive to banish the thoughts of God, which spontaneously arise in our minds, we at once betray the most consummate ingratitude and impiety. When we profess to draw near to God in the exercises of prayer and praise our thoughts often

wander far from their object ; and even upon occasions of unusual solemnity, when it is *reasonable* to expect that our hearts will be kindled into the flame of devotion, we often have cause to be confounded at detecting them roving upon the mountains of vanity.

Almost before the reasoning faculty has begun to be developed we manifest a strong propensity to evil ; upon the smallest inducement we yield to the power of temptation ; and it is an acknowledged process in morals, that the commission of the first sin facilitates the perpetration of every other which follows. Familiarity with guilt gradually softens its natural deformity, weakens the authority of reason, blunts the sensibility of conscience, and eventually introduces a total disrelish for whatsoever things are pure, and just, and lovely ; so that every individual of the human race may, with the greatest justice, say, what St. Paul declared of himself, " In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing."

The existence of moral evil, therefore, is a fact so palpable, as to occur to every mind possessed of the smallest degree of reflection ; but how to account for its *introduction* into the world, in the absence of a divine revelation, was ever a problem of a somewhat difficult solution. Accordingly, in the earlier ages of the world, *some* ascribed its origin to the imperfection of matter—*others* to the decree of fate ; while a *third* class of philosophical speculators endeavoured to remove the difficulty, by declaring that *two* principles ruled the universe—the *one* in its nature essentially evil, and the *other* essentially good. *Scripture alone*, with its wonted clearness and divine authority, dispels the obscurity which overhangs this naturally mysterious subject, by the interesting narration which it gives in the third chapter of the Book of Genesis. From that portion of inspiration, viewed in connexion with the whole tenor of Scripture, it might have been supposed that no difference of opinion could have obtained upon a subject of such paramount importance, and one which Revelation had rendered so clear and intelligible ; and yet, notwithstanding, there is scarcely any doctrine of the Bible upon which a greater variety of opinion has prevailed among the professors of the christian religion. Of these opinions there are *three* which I regard as most worthy of attention. The *first* is held by a class of Christians who,

after their founder, are denominated Socinians, and is, " That mankind come into the world as pure as Adam was at his creation ;" the *second*, which is held by the followers of Arminius, is, " That although the nature of man be somewhat depraved, he is still in possession of the moral sense, and the power of doing good or evil ;" and the *third* is, " That man by the fall became *wholly depraved*, lost the *ability* of doing any thing *as of himself* that is agreeable to the Deity ; that on account of Adam's sin, *all his posterity* come into the world under the curse, and liable to the wrath of God." Of all the doctrines concerning which Revelation professes to treat, there is none of greater importance than the one upon the discussion of which we are about to enter. It lies at the *very foundation* of true religion ; and an error upon this subject *must be fatal*, since all the other doctrines of Christianity flow from and depend upon it. In the following discourse, I shall, therefore, attempt to prove that the *last mentioned* of the above opinions is *alone* founded in Scripture, and conformable to the experience of every age of the world.

I shall, therefore, in the *first* place, prove the depravity of mankind, by showing that *every person* comes into the world with a *natural propensity to evil*.

This appears evident from the fact, that, from the transgression in Paradise, until the present moment there never was a *mere man* who was not guilty of sin. In proof of this, we have the most *express* declarations of sacred Scripture : such as Eccl. vii. 20,—" There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." This was the opinion of an individual whose knowledge of mankind was as extensive as that of any person since his time, and who, moreover, was inspired by the Spirit of God, " who knows the hearts of all men, and what is in man ;" and this he said not merely in reference to the state of mankind in his *own age*, for it was designed to apply to *every rank* of society, and at *every period of the world*.

Similar to this is that description of mankind, which is given by the Psalmist in the 53d psalm : " God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were *any* that did understand, that did seek after God. *Every one* of them is gone back ; they are *altogether* become filthy : there is *none* that doeth good, no, not one." This picture of human nature is no doubt a

maclancholy one, but it is not *on that account* the less just, or the less true; for, when we take a general survey of mankind, we cannot fail to perceive that the great majority of the human race are living without God, and without any available knowledge of the Most High in the world; and that there are many of the actions of those of whose piety we are deeply persuaded, which, in the utmost extent of our charity, we must declare to be contrary to the commandments of God. But to universal experience we need not appeal; for let us turn the eye of inquiry into *our own hearts*, and we shall discover the justice of the Apostle's assertion with regard to himself: "In me dwelleth no good thing." *What man* is there who can affirm that he has kept inviolate *every one* of the divine commandments—that, *in no instance*, and *at no time*, he has failed of his duty to his Creator or to his fellow-men?

"If we say," says the apostle John, "that we have *no sin*, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say that we have *not sinned*, we make Him a *liar*, and the truth is not in us." Certainly the *universal prevalence* of sin evidences a *predisposition* to it; for, by *what* are we to judge of a *tendency* to any thing, but from its *universality*? If from a tree which at the creation brought forth *bad fruit*, had been produced others which had been planted in different soils and different climates, and been favoured with the best culture, but should nevertheless *still produce bad fruit*, would we not be justified in declaring that the *nature* of the tree was *bad*? With *equal* propriety may we pronounce the *nature of man to be corrupt*, which, in *every age* of the world, and in *every situation* in which it was possible he could be placed, has manifested a *radical depravity*, and a *strong impulse to whatever is sinful*.

But not only have *all* men been guilty of sin, but the guilt of every person in *particular* far exceeds his acts of righteousness, whether we consider it in *its demerit* or in *its quantity*. It is necessary to state this, lest it should be asserted, that although every one may be guilty of *some* sins, yet these are outweighed by the number of his good and charitable actions. Our Lord replied to his disciples when they asked him, "Are there *many* that shall be saved? *Straight* is the gate, and *narrow* the way that conducteth unto life, and *few* there be that find it;" and, again, "*Broad* is the

road that leadeth to destruction, and *many* walk thereon;" which expressly declares that the great majority of mankind are making haste to be undone; and that even those who, with *propriety*, may be denominated the children of God, considered in themselves, perform more acts of sin than of righteousness.

The law of God is the rule of our conduct; and whatever *comes short of this standard*, is a breach of it; for we are not to consider those actions *only* as sinful which are done *in violation* of the divine commandments, but the law of God extends likewise to *negative sins*, by which is meant the *omission of any duty* which it requires to be performed. The sum of what the law requires of us is, that we love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our might. But where is the man who fulfils *this* commandment? The *goodness* of God is so *great*, that our *gratitude* ought to be *infinite* also; but as no finite creature is *capable* of fulfilling this precept, the law only demands that our love to God be to the utmost extent of our *capacity*. It is difficult to fix the exact limits of our love; yet we may form some idea of it, from the capabilities of our understanding, to which it will be in proportion. The human understanding is capable of comprehending great objects, and of accomplishing astonishing things. It can comprehend the power which retains the planets in their orbits, and, by means of it, we may form clear ideas of God and of his attributes. But how *vastly short* of this proportion is our *love to God*! With regard to *gratitude alone*, how little of it do we evince, contrasted with the innumerable benefits which we have received!

But, secondly, the depravity of human nature appears, from the little regard which is paid to things of *eternal moment*, while those of a *temporal nature* take a *strong hold* of our *affections*, and *powerfully engage* our *attention*.

A writer* of great celebrity and acuteness observes, "He that will not be so far a rational creature as to reflect upon infinite happiness and misery, must needs condemn himself as not making that use of his understanding he should. The rewards and punishments of another life, which the Almighty has established as the enforcements of his laws, are of weight enough to determine

* Locke on the Human Understanding.

against whatever pleasure or pain this world has to bestow. When the *eternal state* is considered but in its *bare probability*, he that will allow endless happiness to be but the *possible reward* of a good life spent here, and the contrary state the *possible consequence* of a bad, must own himself to judge very much amiss, if he does not conclude that a *virtuous* course of life, with the certain expectation of everlasting bliss which *may* come, is to be preferred to a *vicious* one, with a fear of that dreadful state of misery which it is *very possible may overtake the guilty, or, at least, the terrible uncertain hope of annihilation.*

That disposition of mind which leads us to act contrary to *reason* is, certainly, an evidence of a depraved nature.

It is no difficult task to convince men of what will be for their interest in *this life*. Man is capable of distinguishing the difference between things of long continuance and those of short duration; and we see him act according as it will be most to his advantage which of them to choose. How active are men to procure riches, and provide for old age! Nay, they will even accumulate for the heirs of those riches which perish in the using, although they are ignorant who these heirs shall be, and to what purposes their wealth may be appropriated, after death has put a period to their existence. But about those things which shall *endure for ever*, and which are of so much *greater* value, that they are not worthy to be *compared* with any thing on this earth, they exhibit the most callous and culpable recklessness.

Uninfluenced alike by the promises of God, or by his threatenings, the great majority of mankind set their affections upon *earthly and transitory objects*, which is the *surest evidence* of a carnal and depraved nature. Were men as solicitous about *spiritual* as about *temporal* things, there would be no necessity for the exhortations, the warnings, and the invitations which are so frequently repeated in the sacred Scriptures, and by the ministers of religion whom God hath appointed. For, were not their minds blinded by means of sin, and their nature corrupt, would not their *own reason* be sufficient to induce them to give *all diligence* to make their calling and election sure?

In answer to this, it may be said, that the things of *eternity* are *distant*, whereas those of *time* are *present*—those of *eternity*

doubtful, while, concerning those of *time*, we obtain a certain knowledge by means of our senses, which must make a deeper impression on our minds. To this objection it is a sufficient answer to reply, "That a *bare possibility* that *eternal things may be real* ought to outweigh *every other consideration*; *the happiness* there is a *possibility of obtaining* and *the misery* there is a *danger of incurring* are of such *infinite importance*, that even a *possibility* of them is capable of making a mind, which feels *any concern* for its own *safety*, place them *above every other consideration*. But the expressing a *doubt* upon these subjects strengthens the argument for the depravity of our nature; for none *but those* whose *natures were depraved* could entertain *any doubt* concerning those things which are supported by the *surest evidences*.

But, thirdly, the depravity of mankind will appear still *more clearly*, if we turn our attention, for a short time, to the means which God has employed to restrain wickedness and promote holiness.

"Death," says a certain author, "was brought upon mankind by God in great mercy to restrain them from sin—that, by weakening the power of temptations, by increasing the vanity of all earthly things, he might show unto them the abhorrence with which he views iniquity, and fix in their minds a sense of the dreadful consequences resulting from its commission." This, in one point of view, is a very correct account of death, and not of *death only*, but also of all the other sorrows and troubles where-with mankind are afflicted. For what could tend *more* to lessen the ardour of our pursuit after earthly things than the *certainty* we have of possessing them but for a *short time*, and that they will even be attended with sorrow and care during the *brief period* we will be *permitted* to enjoy them? What influence this consideration has had upon the generality of men, need not be mentioned.

In the antediluvian ages, when the period of human life extended to nearly a thousand years, many of Adam's posterity had an opportunity of hearing from his own mouth concerning the state in which he once lived—of being informed of the intercourse which existed between him and his Creator, before the eating of the tree of knowledge produced a separation, and how, ultimately he was driven from the abodes of paradise, as a punishment for his disobedience. Neither

is it unreasonable to suppose that he would often inculcate upon his posterity the danger there was in breaking the law of God, and the advantages accruing to themselves from a faithful continuance in well doing; and these instructions, we might reasonably suppose, would be listened to with all the attention and reverence which the venerable appearance of Adam might be supposed to command. Yet what effect had they? Human wickedness increased to such an extent, that it repented God that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to the heart! Therefore, as a punishment for their iniquity, He resolved to sweep the whole human race from the face of the earth; and that they might be without excuse, He commissioned Noah, a preacher of righteousness, to warn them of their fate, lest they should still persist in rebellion against the Most High. Nevertheless, they continued to provoke the Almighty to anger; so the deluge came upon them, and that wicked generation—Noah and his family only excepted—perished in their sins. To those who survived there was sufficient evidence of God's displeasure against sin. Everywhere they could turn their eyes, they beheld the earth lying in ruins, on account of human depravity and these sad memorials must have no doubt continued for a long time to be visible. It might have been reasonably expected that those who survived would not only abide by the divine law *themselves*, but that they would likewise inculcate upon their *children* the duty of serving God, and this they might have enforced with arguments the strongest that can possibly be conceived. Yet, for all this, the generation which, from the ark had beheld the mighty waters overspread and lay desolate the earth, were not yet forgotten in the dust, ere their posterity had sunk into the grossest idolatry, paying to the creature that worship and adoration which is due only to the Great Creator.

After this period God called Abraham, that he might have at least *one* family in which his name should be feared and his worship observed. By prospering him in his temporal concerns, by *delivering him from the hands of the kings*, and not *only delivering him*, but obtaining for him a *signal victory*, he shewed to the surrounding nations, that those who serve him, He will assuredly bless and prosper. He also gave another remarkable proof of his displeasure against sin, by destroying the cities

of the plain with fire from heaven; while, at the same time, in the midst of his judgments he displayed mercy by rescuing pious Lot and his family from the impending destruction. The intelligence of this awful catastrophe, as it must have doubtless spread far and wide, and made a deep impression upon the neighbouring nations, could not fail of being likewise attended with a knowledge of the *cause* which had occasioned it, *at least to the greater part of the inhabitants of Canaan*. Nevertheless, they continued in their sin and idolatry with a determined hardness of heart, which seemed to render them proof both against judgment and mercy. The children of Israel were conducted into the promised land by a course of the most wonderful miracles, which exhibited to all that God would be avenged upon the workers of iniquity, and at the same time, that he would reward those who faithfully served him. But did *they* continue faithful to his service who had performed so many wonderful things in their behalf, or did these mercies, as *they were most eminently calculated to do*, attract the love, and secure the gratitude of their recipients? No! On the contrary, they tended *more and more to harden their hearts*, and to produce in them *the most infatuated insensibility*.

Surely, now, we need not multiply any more facts to prove that human nature has fallen *far* from its original purity and dignity. The melancholy truth that men are sinners, *heinous sinners* in the sight of a holy God, is as evident as that men exist—ay! as clear, as though the Eternal Jehovah himself had inscribed it with a sun-beam! Indeed, the marks of human imperfection are so striking, as even sometimes to force themselves upon the observation of the *most careless and unreflecting*; but those *only* whose minds have been *enlightened by divine grace* can have any *adequate* conception of the extent of human depravity. A stately structure mouldering in decay presents not a more melancholy aspect to the eye of sensibility and taste, than does the forlorn condition of the human soul to him who has in some measure been awakened to a sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin! *For Babylon in ruins* is but a *faint emblem* of the desolation of that temple which was once the consecrated abode of Deity, and the sanctuary in which his perceptions were enshrined!

What, indeed, but the contemplation of

such a melancholy picture as this could have extorted such mournful declarations as the following?—

“ God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only *evil continually*; and it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.” “ I planted thee a *noble vine*, wholly a right seed; how, then, art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?” “ How is the gold become *dim*, and the most fine gold changed?” “ The crown has fallen from our head; woe is ours, for we have sinned!” “ When I would do good evil is present with me; for I find a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin; oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

But I now proceed to the *second* part of our subject, which is to prove that mankind are not only wholly depraved; but that the guilt of Adam’s sin in eating the forbidden fruit, is also imputed to his posterity.

In treating a subject of this nature, much caution and humility ought to be employed, for we must allow that it is a subject replete with mystery, and one in which many, attempting to be wise above what is written, have entangled themselves in such difficulties, as have ultimately led them to deny the doctrine. In the sacred Scriptures there are many doctrines which *human reason* is *unable to comprehend*; but if we consider for a moment the *nature* of those subjects about which they are conversant, and, at the same time, the limited powers of reason, we cannot but allow that mysteries there *must be*, and nothing but a vanity peculiar to the depravity of human nature, could induce us to disbelieve or reject doctrines which we *do not, and cannot* comprehend. If we look around us in the kingdom of nature, we shall perceive many things as inscrutable to human reason, as those connected with theology. Yet who would have boldness to deny any of *these well-established facts*? If doctrines are contained in the Bible, or may be *legitimately drawn* from those which *are* contained in it, it is undoubtedly our duty to adopt them whether we be able to explain every thing connected with them or not. That the doctrine of original sin is a doctrine of Scripture, and agreeable to reason, so far as reason can go, and that it is not at variance with

any other part of the *christian system*, I shall attempt to show.

That God created man at first, perfect in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, appears from many express declarations of Scripture. “ God made man in his *own image*, after his likeness: in the image of God created He him.” This image, the Apostle affirms, was the conformity of the *human mind* to that of the *Divine*. Again, when God had completed the work of creation, he pronounced “ *all things to be very good*.” “ But God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; and he cannot look upon sin, but with detestation and abhorrence.” Now, had man been *otherwise* than a *perfect being*, God could not have pronounced “ *all things to be very good*.” Solomon says, “ *This only* have I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.” A great many other passages of Scripture might be adduced, which clearly prove that man, as he came originally from the hands of his Creator, was a perfect being, free from all sin, and from the *least inclination* to commit iniquity.

With man in this state, God made a covenant which is contained in *these words*: “ Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” The objection to this being called a covenant, from its not receiving this name in Scripture, is of *no weight*. A covenant is an agreement between two parties, in which they undertake to perform certain duties. To this a *promise* was annexed in case of *obedience*, and a *penalty* in the event of *transgression*. All these properties of a covenant are to be found in the words which we have just quoted. We have the *two* contracting parties—God and man. That man did enter *willingly* into this agreement, will appear sufficiently clear, when we reflect that the *human will*, was, at this time, in unison with the *divine*; and, therefore, he must of *necessity* have entered into this compact *voluntarily*. We have the one party (man) engaging to perform certain duties. The command of God, which we have already seen man *voluntarily* complied with, was, “ Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not surely eat.” And the *promise of life* is evidently implied in the *penalty* which is threatened,

“In the *day* thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” It is a perversion of language to inform us, that *no promise* is annexed: by every person, unless his mind be perverted with prejudice, it will be early allowed that a *promise is implied in the threatening*. Seeing, therefore, that we have all the *properties* of a covenant, it is a matter of little importance, whether we be allowed to give it this *name*, so long as the *reality* is granted. I shall now proceed, shortly, to inquire whether Scripture confines the one party, in this covenant transaction, only to *Adam*, or extends it to *all his posterity*, examining also which *view* is best supported by arguments drawn from *reason*.

In considering the words in which this transaction is related, we find that *Adam* is addressed *personally* in the 2d person singular, “In the day *thou* eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” But every one conversant with his Bible will recollect, upon numerous passages, in which the *head of a family* is thus addressed, while it was never doubted but that his *descendants* were *also* intended. Thus, when Noah cursed Canaan, we cannot suppose that it was *he alone* who was included in this curse. God promised to *Abraham*, saying, “to *thee* will I give this land; and in *thee* shall *all* the families of the earth be blessed.” To *Abraham personally* this promise was *never fulfilled*. Nay, all that he possessed was only a *small spot of ground* in which to deposit the remains of himself and his family. From these and several other passages of Scripture, which *could* have been mentioned, it appears that *Adam’s* being addressed in the 2d person singular, can form no valid objection to the doctrine of original sin. The truth of this doctrine appears, from the punishment that was threatened being inflicted upon *all his posterity*. “In the *day* thou eatest thereof, *thou* shalt surely die.”

Before proceeding to illustrate this argument, it will be necessary to show the *meaning* of this threatening, with regard to the *time* of its being put in execution, to obviate an objection which might be urged, “That *Adam’s* posterity could not be included in this penalty, for had it been put in execution at the time it was threatened, he would have *had no posterity*.” These words, however, imply no more than the *certainty* of this death. As a parallel passage, we may mention (Ezek. xxxiii. 12, 13,) “The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgres-

sion: as for the wickedness of the wicked he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live in the day when he sinneth; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.” This passage *evidently* implies a *connexion* subsisting between *death*, and the *commission of sin*, and not the *time* at which *death* shall occur; or, “In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,” *may signify*, that on that day he became subject to death, and all the evils of life; or, it may signify, that on that day he became *spiritually dead*, or was brought into that state in which all mankind are by nature, when they are said to be “dead in trespasses and sins.”

That God cannot punish *an innocent person*, (except as in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, where a great moral end was to be accomplished thereby,) is a truth which cannot be denied, without detracting from his holiness and justice. That death considered *abstractly* is an evil, may be adopted as a truth which needs *no demonstration*. It may, therefore, be drawn as a legitimate consequence, that *all* of our race who are subject to death, are regarded as *sinners* in the sight of God. Of our race, we readily admit, there are many of whom it may be said they receive death as a punishment for their *actual sin*, yet there are a great many who are *incapable* of committing *such sin*, and are *yet subject to sickness and to dissolution*. Does the Lord take *pleasure* in afflicting his creatures to *no purpose*? Or is such an idea *at all* consistent with his character? It is unnecessary for us to show that the Almighty can, in the exercise of his sovereignty, deprive his creatures of that existence which he gave them. We have only to know that his mode of procedure is not contrary to the manner in which it is revealed to us that he acts. And when we consider the pains which generally attend upon the extinction of life, might we not suppose, that in the exercise of this sovereignty, a Being of such infinite goodness, as God is everywhere represented to be, would adopt the *easiest possible method* of depriving us of existence, were we *free* from guilt? But if we consider *still farther*, that man was created with a great desire after immortality, can his being deprived of that which he longs after, be considered in *any other light*, than as *an evil or punishment for his transgressions*? All, there

fore, who are subject to *death*, are *also* guilty of *sin*. This connexion subsisting between death and the commission of sin, is exhibited to us in the strongest light, in numerous passages of Scripture. "The soul that *sinneth*, it shall *surely die*." Which form of expression evidently implies, that the soul which *sinneth not* shall *live*. "Wherefore," says the Apostle, "as by *one* man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon *all men*, because *all* have sinned." *No exception* is here made. The *infant of yesterday*, as well as the *man of grey hairs* who has gone on adding sin to sin, is included.

Lastly, from a view of the scheme of redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ, *another* argument may be drawn for the imputation of Adam's transgression to his posterity.

We find Adam put in opposition to Christ in so many passages of Scripture that we must naturally suppose some resemblance to exist between them. Rom. v. 19. "For as by *one man's offence* *many* were made *sinners*, so by the *obedience* of *one* shall *many* be made *righteous*." "As in *Adam all die*, so in *Christ shall all be made alive*." Those who reject that part of the doctrine of original sin which refers to the imputation of Adam's transgression to his posterity, are under the necessity of denying the atonement of Christ. They inform us that Christ came into the world to teach us the Father's will, to abrogate the ceremonies of the Jewish ritual, &c. But the Scriptures of truth declare, that he came to *die for the sins of his people*.

Solomon says, "This *only* have I found: God made man *upright*, but they have sought out *many inventions*." This seems to be a *conclusive* proof that *all mankind* are included in the sin of Adam, or in the covenant that was made with him; for man, in general, is *here* considered as coming pure from the hands of his Creator, and as having fallen from this his original state. Thus have I attempted to prove that human nature has *fallen* from its *original* purity and dignity, in consequence of the disobedience of the first pair to the express injunction of their Creator; and that all mankind are implicated in the guilt of that act, by which their progenitor brought death and misery into the world. It now only remains for us to attend to the *practical instructions* which may be drawn from this important subject; for having discovered the *disease* with which our nature is afflicted, it becomes

us, in the next place, to direct your attention to the *remedy*, which the goodness of God has provided for us in our fallen condition. It is a melancholy truth, as we have already seen, that the most humiliating descriptions of our state by *nature* are given in sacred Scripture.

We are *there* described as being spiritually poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked: as being dead in trespasses and in sins; and as of ourselves so powerless as to resemble an infant which is cast forth into an open field friendless and forlorn! But from this abject condition is there *no prospect of escape*? Is there none to be found possessed of generosity and ability to effect our deliverance? Yes! From our guilty and degraded condition there *is* a prospect of escape! There *is one* to be found, possessed both of power and of will to accomplish even our *immediate* deliverance! *Jesus Christ*, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever! is *perfectly adequate to the purpose*!

Do you doubt his *power*? Behold the gates of brass burst before *him*, and the fetters of iron fall at *his* command! Do you question his *will*? He, who spake as never man spake, has declared, "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" Are you poor, and miserable, and wretched, and do you suspect whether he be in possession of stores adequate to supply your numerous demands? The Spirit of God hath declared, "That he was anointed to preach *good tidings unto the poor*; that he was sent to *bind up the broken-hearted*; to proclaim *liberty* to the *captives*, and the opening of the *prison* to them that are *bound*; to announce the acceptable year of the Lord; to *comfort* all that *mourn*; to give unto them *beauty for ashes*; the *oil of joy* for *mourning*, and the *garment of praise* for the *spirit of heaviness*." Are you spiritually blind and naked? His declaration to you is, "Hearken unto me ye stout-hearted, that are *far* from righteousness; I bring *near* my righteousness, it shall not be *far off*, and my salvation shall not tarry!" "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed; and to anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see." Are you conscious of your *own weakness*, and convinced of the necessity of obtaining the aid of the Holy Spirit to enable you to work out your salvation? You are

commanded, "To *ask*, and ye shall *receive*; to *seek*, and ye shall *find*; to *knock*, and it shall be *opened unto you*!" What promises *more rich*, *more gracious*, and *more suited to your circumstances* than *these*, can you possibly demand?

Alas! It is not the *lack* of promises, but the *indifference* which is manifested to the *most precious* which *can be given* of which we have to complain! And does not this *insensibility*, as I have already attempted to prove, *most strikingly* evince the sad degeneracy of our nature? The spectacle of any sublime scene, the shock of an earthquake, or the fall of a mighty cataract, would powerfully engage our attention. Yea, even objects of *comparatively trifling importance* will occupy our time and our care, while the declaration of the *stupendous fact*, that *the great God who made the universe*, and who, by a *single exertion* of his power, could have *annihilated* this insignificant speck from his vast dominions; the declaration, I say, that this great Being condescended for us guilty rebels to veil his glory, to assume our likeness, and finally, to terminate a life embittered by the ingratitude of the very creatures whom he came to save, by an ignominious death, is listened to with the utmost coolness and indifference!

If we are convinced of the truth of revelation, we must be aware that it is contrary both to reason and Scripture, to defer for a *single moment*, the consideration of those subjects which have *eternity* for their end? Yet have we not seen the cheek of health turn pale, the eye that beamed with intelligence grow dim in death, and the arm of the strong man fall nerveless by his side, without *any corresponding impression* being made—without even the *reflection* arising that these awful warnings were given that the living might lay them to heart!

Are not *many of us* so *far* from feeling any anxiety about our eternal destiny, that we are *at present* counting upon the *enjoyment of the pleasures of sin for many years to come*? And yet who can tell, but that, concerning some in this assembly, the decree of heaven may be gone forth, "Cut him down, why cumbereth he the ground?" "Thou fool, *this night* thy soul shall be required of thee!"

Oh! cry earnestly, therefore, for the assistance of the Spirit of God, to enable you to subdue the *stubbornness* of your nature, and lead you to attend to the things that belong to your everlasting peace, before they be for ever hid from your eyes! Which may God of his infinite mercy grant, and unto his name be praise. Amen.

THE NATURE OF SALVATION;

A SERMON PREACHED IN TRINITY CHAPEL, ABERDEEN,

By the Rev. DAVID CARMENT,
Of Ross-Keen.

Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas; and brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"
—ACTS xvi. 29, 30.

I. We shall direct your attention to what that salvation is which sinners ought to seek after, and which awakened sinners do seek after. And,

II. Attempt to give some account of the feelings of those concerned about this salvation, and show that those feelings are natural and proper in such circumstances.

Ere we proceed to the discussion of these points, it may be proper, by way of preface, to mention some things to which the attention should be directed.

1st. It is proper to consider who the person was who conducted himself in the manner described. He was a jailor and a man of hardened feelings, who was desirous to exceed his commission; for we find that

he thrust the feet of the Apostles into the stocks, and we are led to suppose that he was inclined to severity. This was the person who became a trophy of the grace of God.

2d. We may observe, again, the place. No place can exclude God. And the place here was a prison—the most unlikely of all places for the manifestation of the power of God. No doubt there were in this prison at this time two of the servants of the living God; but they were prisoners, and bound. Yet God introduces himself into the prison, and he there reclaims from the error of his way a man who seems to have been worse than, perhaps, the greatest malefactor under his charge. When God comes he beats down every barrier.

3d. But we have to attend, in the next place, to the exercise of Paul and Silas. It may put many Christians to shame in our days. They were not employed in murmuring and repining; but mark the conduct of those men of God, and let it give us a lesson. Though unjustly treated and condemned by the magistrates, yet still, in the prison-house, they are engaged not only in prayer to God, but also in praise—in the duty of thanksgiving. And we see what was the result of this conduct; they were made the honoured instruments in the hands of God of breaking the bonds of one who was, as it were, bound in the fetters of sin and Satan, and bringing him forth into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

4th. We shall now consider the occasion of this man's conversion. There was a great earthquake; the doors were opened; every man's bonds were loosed; the jailor was roused from his sleep, and led to think that he would be made responsible for their escape. Under this impression he drew his sword and would have killed himself, "but Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm; for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas." Some would attempt to say that his feelings arose from his being in terror of his life. This I deny; his natural fear had subsided as soon as he heard the Apostle calling to him that they were all there. The agitation of his mind evidently rose from a spiritual source, and, I maintain, had no reference to the situation in which he before found himself.

5th. But we find in the Apostle's conduct a lesson of instruction. How careful they were to save the life of the man who had injured them. But without insisting farther on this particular, I shall now endeavour to direct your attention to the salvation which sinners ought to seek after, and which awakened sinners do seek after.

1st. It is a salvation from sin that an awakened sinner seeks after, for sin is not only the enemy of God, but it is the destroyer of the soul of man. So long as you remain in it and your sins are unpardoned, you must be in a state of distress and anxiety of mind. All who have been taught by the Spirit of God must desire to be delivered from sin, for Christ came to deliver his people from their sins. There are many in our day who live as if Jesus merely came to deliver them from wrath. Sin is the great enemy of God as well as of man;

it is that which has put a wall of separation between God and man; which has destroyed the beauty of his earthly paradise; which has brought down the fires of divine vengeance from heaven; which caused the earth to open her mouth and swallow up Korah, Dathan and Abiram; which has opened the house appointed for all living; which kindled the flames that never die! While sin remains unpardoned, man must remain at a distance from God: it is a natural consequence of the character of God. Of course, then, the salvation we speak of is a great salvation; for it is a salvation from sin, that which will, if you live and die under its influence, put a wall of separation between you and God. It makes us to see the evil of sin in such a light as to lead us to cry out with the jailor, "What shall I do to be saved?" The far greater number of Gospel hearers are quite content with themselves; and I conceive there cannot be a greater demonstration of the bewitching power of sin than to see so many congregating in the house of God, and to find so little real concern for sin. You may say, "We are no reprobates." True, but if you are not converted you cannot be saved. There is no place for you different from that into which the wicked are cast. All whose sins are not forgiven, must be driven out from the presence of God to all eternity. There is no comfort for you till you have scriptural assurance that your sins are forgiven.

2d. This salvation is a salvation from wrath. This is closely connected with salvation from sin, for "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Though the awakened soul will seek salvation from sin, yet still it must also seek salvation from wrath. Of this the jailor was aware. His awakening was instantaneous, yet the flood which was poured on his sight enabled him to see what sin was. Is there no danger of you being exposed to the wrath and curse of God? Is it not a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God? Is not that salvation a precious salvation which delivers not only from the power but also from the penalty of sin, and gives you a title to participate in all the blessings of Christ's death? It is a fearful thing to think how many in a land of light are still exposed to the wrath and curse of God, and yet that no cry is heard, "what must I do to be saved?" Are you not afraid of the terrors of the Almighty? Are

you not exposed to the terrors of that law you have violated? And unless you obtain an assurance that your sins are forgiven, is it not time to awake out of your sleep, and with the jailor to exclaim, "What must I do to be saved?"

3d. But, again, this salvation implies being entitled to, and made meet for, eternal unmixed happiness. Now the hearers of the Gospel do not seem to mark the distinction that ought to be kept in view between being entitled to eternal happiness, and being made meet for it. You see many who are strenuous supporters of what is called evangelical truth—many who contend for Gospel ministry, yet living in such a manner as to show that they are not made meet for eternal happiness with God in heaven. If our justification gives us a title to heaven, our sanctification makes us meet for it. But they do not glorify God in their hearts or with their substance. If we were to enter into the houses of all who heard the Gospel from day to day, do you suppose we would find no drunkards—no swearing—no Sabbath breakers? I am afraid there are many parents in this congregation who never bend a knee; (at least if there are not, they are like no other congregation I ever met with.) Is there any thing here like holiness of heart—like what ought to be found in those who are in the way of heaven? No! It is evident that the salvation here spoken of consists not only in being entitled to, but also in being made meet for, heaven. You must turn your back upon sin, and hate it with a perfect hatred, and every part of your conduct must be such as will adorn and illustrate the doctrine which you have professed to believe. Remember that this salvation implies not only that you become entitled to heaven, being justified by faith, but that you are also made meet for the holy society of it; for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

Now, this is the salvation which every sinner ought to seek after, and which a soul truly awakened will seek after. "What must I do to be saved?" was the cry of the jailor; and this will be the cry of every soul truly awakened. When the Spirit of God accompanies the word to a man's conscience, he has no rest: like the jailor, he comes trembling. When he is once convinced of sin he has no rest till he obtain that deliverance which is pointed out in the Gospel—until the way of escape is opened up to him from the avenger of blood that now pursues him. He can have no peace until he has been brought into a justified state,

Such a sinner is not satisfied with even the assurance of the pardon of sin, and this is one cause of those distressing feelings that agitate the minds of many true believers. A real Christian desires not only to have his sins pardoned, but he desires also to be delivered from the very being of sin in the soul; and often when he feels that he is making no progress in holiness, he is inclined at times to fold his hands in despair; but here God steps in to his help. As the soul advances in the knowledge of God—as a greater flood of light is poured into the soul, it becomes more and more acquainted with itself and more ready to see those sins which he had not seen or apprehended before; and, I believe the distresses of believers arise often, strange as it may seem, from the increase of knowledge. They come to be more acquainted with the guilt of their own hearts—to form a more correct estimate of what the christian character ought to be. But still they must long after holiness; every fresh acquisition of light is employed for the crucifying the body of sin, and for approximating nearer and nearer to God.

There is a strong feeling of self-preservation implanted in the heart of man; yet it is quite common for the men and women of this world to be much surprised when they see any concerned about their souls. Now, it is perfectly clear that it is a natural instinct in man to seek his own preservation, and it is natural, when the lives of those near to us are in danger, to be much concerned. Often have we seen the affectionate husband or wife shedding tears of the deepest sorrow at the bedside of a beloved partner. You can shed tears for a sick child, a sick husband or wife; but you have no tears to shed for a dead soul. You give tears in the one case; and unfeeling would the man be, indeed, who would say in such a case that you made much ado about nothing. Now, surely if it is natural to wish for the preservation of the body, is it not proper that every thing should be done for the preservation of your spiritual life? And, after all your efforts to save the life of your friend, death comes at last and takes him away; but the life that God gives is a spiritual life that cannot be taken away. It secures an eternal existence; therefore, you surely are called upon to seek the salvation of your souls as the one thing needful. This ought to be the occupation of every man and every woman. All is lost, unless the salvation of the soul is secured. But, again, we see among men an utter abhorrence of every thing connected

with this. A physician will not sell poison, without the precaution of writing poison on it. Now, I ask you, ought it not to be equally our concern to preserve us from every thing that would be injurious to the soul? A parent will remove out of the way of a child every thing that would endanger his life, and are you equally careful to remove out of his sight every thing that would be hurtful to his soul? No; you will, under the influence of sin, put in their way what will ensure the loss of your own souls, and also those of your offspring.

But, again, if a person sees the wrath of God ready to lay hold upon him, he must be desirous to escape from it. What is it, then, that makes the greater number of hearers unconcerned under the Gospel? Why, it is just this: They do not see their danger. But awaken the sleepers when the house is in flames around them, and they will immediately become alarmed. So we wish to awaken you from the drunkenness of sin, and to take a true view of your state as sinners before God. You will profess to believe that you are sinners before God; but have you obtained assurance of the favour of God? Have you been justified by faith, and brought to the enjoyment of peace of conscience? Now if you have not, it is time to bestir yourselves. Death is in the way; judgment is before you; the great white throne will be set, and you shall be judged according to the things that are written in the book, whether they have been good or evil. But I must go on, and, by way of application, just ask you a few questions.

1st. Are you convinced of sin? Has it ever been a trouble to you? Now it is evident, that unless you are convinced of sin, you will never seek after a Saviour. Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. Of course, then, you do not need a Saviour. It is evident that you are not a convinced sinner—that you are a stranger to the evils of your own heart, and you must be a stranger to Christ.

2d. Again, can you be satisfied with the trifles of time? I am sure if you will tell the truth, you would say that you are in uncertainty about your salvation. But the poor soul is forgotten and neglected, and the day of death, judgment, and eternity, are put far out of view. Can you be satisfied while this is a matter of uncertainty with you? Is it not a fearful risk to lay down your head upon your pillow while in a state of uncertainty about your soul, when

you know not but this night your soul may be required of you? And would you part with the joys of eternity for the trifles of time? What are your thoughts on this subject? Are you not ready to say within yourselves that this man makes too much ado about this matter, and that you hope matters are not so bad as he seems to suppose? I believe no man or angel could tell the ten-thousandth part of the danger that lies before you. Time is short; it is short with the youngest of you. Is there any thing of so much importance as the salvation of your souls? And will you not be persuaded, like Mary of old, to choose that good part which shall never be taken away from you? Will you despise the great salvation of God? The Son of God proclaimeth by my instrumentality, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

Are you concerned about this salvation? What is the tenor of your conversation, and on what are your affections set? Let me entreat you to lay these things to heart. Think about the salvation of your souls. Endeavour to make your calling and your election sure. Unless the Word be mixed with faith, it cannot profit. Unless your life and conversation be a living commentary upon the doctrines you profess to believe, let me tell you, you are in great danger. Now, is there cause to fear that the Word of God is returning empty? Where is the heart on which it has made impression? Where is the soul that is now ready to cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" Think that the Saviour is now weeping for you, as for the sinners in Jerusalem of old, and that you will not come unto Him, that ye might have life. Is there one soul awakened to see the danger of sin? To him would I say, in my Master's name, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." There are in him blessings that will make thee happy in time, and happy through eternity. While you remain at a distance from Jesus, you must be miserable. Let me entreat you to come to that man who has opened a fountain to wash away the filth and impurity of sin. O, then, come to him for life and salvation! Come to Christ for peace and pardon—for redemption from all your iniquities, and for glory, honour, and immortality hereafter. He will not only entitle you to the blessings of his salvation, but he will bestow his Spirit on the work of sanctification in your souls, and make you perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 3D MAY, 1834.

No. 110. | SERMON by the Rev. N. MORREN, A.M., Greenock.
SERMON by the Rev. ANDREW RUSSELL, A.M., Haddington. Price 2d

THE TRUE ESTIMATE OF LIFE ;
A SERMON PREACHED IN GREY PLACE CHAPEL, GREENOCK,
By the Rev. N. MORREN, A.M.

“ He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.” —MATTHEW, x. 39.

“ THE marks of truth in the Gospel history are so striking and so inimitable, that the *inventor* of it would be a more astonishing character than the *hero*.” Such was the reluctant confession extorted from a celebrated philosopher, or, to speak more correctly, a philosophizing infidel of modern times. And though it was dictated, perhaps, as much by his capricious temper and well-known love of singularity and effect, as by any sober conviction of its justness, the declaration is not on that account the less true or significant. It is, indeed, the utter impossibility of accounting on any known principles, for the existence and establishment of Christianity in the world, on the supposition of its being a fiction of man, which furnishes, if not the most direct, yet one of the most unanswerable of the varied proofs of its being a revelation from God. Let it be, as is alleged, the offspring of deceit. They who treat it as such, have not only to assign a satisfactory reason for the superhuman ingenuity displayed in the invention of the story—for the original and perfect character of the hero—for the consistency of the different parts—for the sublimity of the doctrines and the purity of the precepts—with them it farther rests to unfold the secret of its ready reception and astonishing success among men, directly and avowedly opposed, as it is, to their favourite passions and darling vices; and requiring, as it does, for the attainment of its hopes a disposition to relinquish all that is commonly held most dear. Had its author

been one of the numerous tribe of impostors, whose only object is by any means to gain proselytes, and thereby promote their private views of aggrandizement, he would doubtless have pursued a far different method. He would, like the false prophet of the East, have endeavoured to humour the wayward inclinations and corrupt propensities of those whom he sought to delude, and represented the profession of his religion as a source at once of sensual ease and of worldly advantage. But does the Gospel of Christ, however much it may accommodate itself to human frailty, thus meanly bend to human depravity? On the contrary, while it conceals not the prevalence of sin among men, or their proneness to indulge in it—it boldly condemns sin in *every* form—it will admit of no compromise with it on *any* terms; its command is: “ Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity;” and instead of holding out the final enjoyment of its blessings as unattended with present inconvenience, by the similitudes of a “narrow way” to be trodden, a “race to be run,” a “warfare” to be accomplished, it forcibly indicates the extreme difficulty of the acquisition, and the painful sacrifices with which it is accompanied.

But, granting for a moment (what cannot, however, be easily proved) that there is a something in the constitution of man’s mind, favourable to the admission of a religion, which enforces such severe requisitions; and granting farther, that the supposed fabricator of this religion, with a sagacity unequalled

by any who have travelled with him in the career of imposture, had discovered such a principle, and had acted upon it in the formation of his system, still it would be natural to expect that he would have exhibited this part of the scheme in as gradual, and gentle, and insinuating a manner as possible, and not have startled his hearers with language which seems much more fitted to revolt than to invite—to excite disgust rather than to inspire attachment. Here, however, the presence and the majesty of a divine lawgiver are again conspicuously manifest; his strict, unbending, though necessary requirements are equalled in dignity only by the language in which they are conveyed—a language truly worthy of Deity to utter, and of man to obey—combining a simplicity and grandeur which carry with them the idea of supreme authority—and compared with which mere human mandates

"Lose, disconcerted, and like folly show."

By such marks have the communications of the Almighty to our race been characterized in every age: and as under the former dispensation, a commanding "Thus saith the Lord" ushered in the revelations of Jehovah to his ancient people; so, in the Gospel period, He who is Jehovah's fellow employs, in pronouncing his high behests, language no less lofty and authoritative: "I will, be thou clean"—"Ye believe in God, believe also in me"—"He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me"—"He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it."

These words form part of our Lord's instructions to his twelve disciples, when sending them abroad on their apostolic commission; and though primarily intended for them, and subsequently incorporated by St. Matthew into his narrative, for the direction and encouragement of the suffering Christians of Palestine, (for whom according to the concurrent testimony of antiquity, this Gospel was originally composed,) yet they may, without inappropriety, be considered as addressed to believers of every country, period, and profession: more especially, as they are to be met with in a different connexion, and somewhat altered in form, in another part of this book, as well as in the writings of the other Evangelists. Their frequent occurrence, indeed, leads to the conjecture, that this may have been a com-

mon and proverbial maxim of our Saviour, couched in the enigmatical language which abounded in his conversation, and which, like the mode of instruction by parables, while it was suited to the taste of his audience, and represented spiritual objects in a familiar light, likewise served to arrest the hearer's attention, to fix his meditation more intently on the subject, and, consequently, to leave upon his mind a more permanent impression of the truths it was designed to convey.

The text adverts to two different and opposite lines of conduct; and, by informing us of their respective issues, offers inducements for avoiding the one and pursuing the other. Although involving apparently two distinct propositions, viz. one respecting the error to be shunned—"he that findeth his life shall lose it," and conversely, one regarding the duty to be performed—"he that loseth his life for the sake of Christ, shall find it;" yet, as every duty has its corresponding transgression, these are naturally resolvable into one position, which is more conveniently stated under the second form, viz. a duty to be practised, along with motives for its performance, derived from a consideration both of the threatening attached to its neglect, and the promise made to its fulfilment. This duty evidently is, that of unshaken and invincible adherence to the cause of the Saviour in the face of all opposition, and a readiness to forego every comfort, to brave every danger, to endure every suffering, even unto the death, for the sake of Him and his Gospel.

But, in attempting to explain its precise nature and the rewards annexed to it, a difficulty presents itself, occasioned by the seemingly contradictory and paradoxical language in which the whole is expressed. While some affix to these terms a mystical sense, intelligible only to themselves, others endeavour to remove the ambiguity by adopting an interpretation nearly literal. Upon the supposition that the words had mainly a reference to the persecution which the Apostles and primitive Christians were to undergo, they regard them as containing a threatening, and promise applicable to it alone, and as purporting, that he who through a dastardly fear of man should seek to preserve his life, or the advantages connected with it, at the expense of his religion, should be exposed to the loss of at least the comfortable possession and relish of these, if not of the very benefits themselves; while, on the other hand, he who in the same

cause should risk his life or other temporal blessings, should, under the providential care of the God whom he served, have these prolonged to him, and enjoy in the end everlasting happiness. A slight degree of countenance is given to this exposition by a parallel passage in St. Luke: "Whosoever shall *seek* to save his life shall lose it," as well as by a declaration of the Redeemer, to be found in Mark's Gospel, "That there was no man who had left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for his sake and the Gospel's, but should receive an hundredfold now in this time, with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life." Besides, godliness, we know, has the promise even of the life that now is; it is the meek that shall inherit the earth, and delight themselves in the abundance of peace; and it cannot be denied that this has occasionally received a striking accomplishment, when in times of persecution faithful witnesses for the truth have been seen to escape, while wavering and cowardly hypocrites were visited with judgments due to their apostasy.

These cases, however, have been but of rare occurrence; and they do on no account warrant us to put upon a passage of universal application a construction so partial and limited. Nor is this necessary; for, in order to clear it from every obscurity, and present its meaning in a plain, intelligible shape, we have only to consider the word "life," employed here, in two different acceptations, in both of which it is frequently to be met with in Scripture. The first is in the sense of "animal life," or that vital principle which animates the body and maintains its union with the soul; the second is that which alone deserves the name—"life eternal," the glorious consummation of spiritual life, or the life of the renewed soul, which consists in the immortal and happy existence of man's better part in heaven. Viewed, then, in this point of light, our text simply bears, that he who, by denying his God and abandoning his religion, *finds*, or as it is elsewhere expressed, *saves* his natural life, shall lose his soul, and fall short of eternal blessedness; but that he who cheerfully sacrifices, or manifests a disposition to sacrifice his life and all its enjoyments from a conscientious regard to his divine Lord, shall *save* his soul alive, and finally partake of that life which is everlasting.

It were, however, a fatal and most unworthy misconception of the whole scope of

Christianity to imagine, that this command conveys the remotest insinuation that the sacrifices therein enjoined are, considered apart from the motives which ought to prompt to them, at all pleasing to the Deity, or form in any respect a meritorious condition of everlasting happiness. This were to identify the benign religion of Jesus with the austerities of the cloister; it were even degrading it to a level with the gloomy superstitions of Hindoostan, or the inhuman rites of the worshippers of Moloch. But it is not so that the God of Christians takes any delight in sacrifices of this nature as viewed in themselves; he grieves not willingly, he chastens not unnecessarily any of his children; and far different indeed from either the afflicting of the soul, or the giving the body to be burned, is the method which he has appointed for the restoration of his guilty creatures to his favour and image. Other foundation for a sinner's acceptance in his sight can no man lay save that is laid, which is Christ Jesus; in his atonement and righteousness as the ground of reconciliation, we are interested by that faith which is of the operation of his Holy Spirit, and which, when genuine, never fails to be accompanied by grateful attachment to his person, ardent zeal in his cause, and holy obedience to his commandments. But, then, it is right and fitting that this faith should be tried, and the reality of these affections ascertained by an infallible test; and accordingly, our blessed Lord, foreseeing the extreme prevalence of lukewarmness and hypocrisy among his professed followers, here lays down a criterion by which, for the satisfaction of the individual himself, of the church, and of the world, the false-hearted may be detected, sincere devotedness to his cause discovered, and the mere form distinguished from the power of godliness. The most effectual means of securing these results, is evidently to be found in the severity of the trials which they who profess to love him are prepared to undergo by his appointment. And this is a mode in which all who have ever tasted the grace of God in truth will most cheerfully acquiesce—acknowledging with humble gratitude, that the greatest of the sacrifices which he can require of them sinks into utter insignificance, if measured by the dimensions of that perfect sacrifice once made on Calvary. They feel, besides, that their religion, if it be *any thing*, is to them *every thing*; and they would, therefore, willingly renounce their every present enjoyment, were it only to manifest

the sincerity of their desire to be put in possession of its distant invisible blessings.

The hypocritical professor, on the other hand, though he, too, may speculate much, and talk loudly about denying himself and taking up his cross, yet when the season of trial comes, throws of the mask ; and then does it appear that the world is still supreme in his heart, and that heaven was never valued by him but as a secondary good which he wished to have in reversion when he could keep his hold of this earth no longer.

Now, in selecting the touchstone of his people's sincerity, there is a manifest propriety in our Lord fixing upon the sacrifice of life. Of all the natural gifts of God to man, this, as it is the first, is likewise the most precious ; in it all the others centre, on it they depend, without it they can have no existence : hence its value is universally acknowledged. Some, indeed, may feel or pretend to feel indifferent to it ; the careless and foolhardy may sport it away as a thing of nought ; the desperate suicide may rid himself of it as of a grievous burden ; and even the man of piety, when a prey to unalleviated sorrow, may feel the tie to this world weakened, and exclaim in the bitterness of his grief, " My soul is weary of my life ! " but all these are particular states of mind which in nowise affect the general truth. The desire of self-preservation is an instinctive principle which man shares in common with the whole animal creation ; and, however much it may at times be deadened, the trembling anxiety of the stoutest heart at the apprehended approach of dissolution impressively proclaims how strongly it is rooted in our nature, and how well he knew what was in us who said, " Skin for skin—yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." Yet this life, so valuable and so dear to us, we are bound to sacrifice at the call of our divine Lord ; for that such is the plain unambiguous import of the text, we conceive to be too manifest to require any proof. Nor, does the passage before us stand alone in support of this duty ; it is consonant with the whole tenour of revealed truth, and arises indeed spontaneously from the natural operation of christian principle on a mind that is born from above. The occasions, too, upon which such a requirement may literally be enforced, will readily occur to any one who is in the least acquainted with the circumstances in which a Christian may by the current of events be placed, while journeying through the enc-

mies' land to his heavenly home. His lot is cast among those who, either reject the christian faith or profess it under a grossly corrupted form ; or it may be among those who, if not perverted so much from the simplicity of the Gospel, are yet strangers to its liberal and tolerant spirit, we can then conceive, without difficulty, of many cases arising in which by boldly adhering to his christian profession—by defending the truth against error, and the rights of conscience against encroachment—by employing every lawful expedient to promote his master's honour and advance his master's cause, the disciple of Jesus may be called on to seal his testimony with his blood. The records of past ages, the annals of our own country, are filled with the recital of such scenes of suffering ; and who dares presume to assert that they will never again be repeated ?

To confine ourselves, however, to this literal interpretation of the commandment, were to view it in too contracted a light ; it is for the principle which it recognizes that it is chiefly valuable ; and this, though in the form of a specific precept, is intended to be descriptive of character. A bare compliance with the mere letter of the law were nothing, or worse than nothing ; he fulfills its *spirit* best, who takes the disposition which it indirectly recommends as the model for his own. Regarding this injunction, then, as a test of our fidelity, there is in it a peculiar force, seeing that the sacrifice it demands necessarily includes that of all other enjoyments. If we might, for a moment, compare, what differ so essentially in value, the gifts of God to Christians with their returns to him, it might be said, that as his having given his Son for them, is a pledge of his conferring upon them every other blessing, so their acknowledged duty to devote their lives to him ought to be of itself a sufficient argument for their dedicating to him whatever is inferior in value. This consideration, my friends, brings home the precept to us in all its length, and breadth, and universality of application in the present day, equally as in the times of the Apostles, and renders it impossible for the most ingenious self-deceiver under a religious profession, to screen himself from the practical inquiries it suggests.

Does God claim, and justly claim the life ? Unquestionably, then, all those advantages and comforts that tend to its preservation and happiness are His, by virtue of a right no less valid ! Hence this command not

only requires the abandonment of those delights which are in themselves sinful, and because of which the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience; it not only embraces the whole of that most important, but, we fear, least practised of christian duties—*self-denial*; it not only cuts at the root of all sloth, and ease, and selfish indulgence, it likewise insists on the relinquishment of lawful pleasures and ordinary comforts, when they stand in the way of duty or of conscience. Thus are worldly possessions an obstacle in the christian course? We are to bear joyfully the spoiling of our goods, knowing we have in heaven a more enduring substance. Are innocent enjoyments? The afflictions of the people of God are, when necessary, to be preferred to them. Is liberty or civil privileges? We are to take pleasure in bonds and imprisonments for the sake of Christ. Are the dearest of our earthly friends? We are to cleave in preference to the friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Is it, finally, what many esteem dearer than life itself, our credit and reputation in the world? Even, then, instead of shrinking from the ordeal, we are to esteem the reproach of Christ our truest glory, and to rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. In a word, is there in our varied intercourse with an unbelieving and ungodly world any one thing of what we have, of what we are, or of what we do, that has a tendency to impede the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, either in our own souls, or amongst our fellow-men—even *that*, dear though it may be as a right hand or a right eye, we are cheerfully to abandon? The Saviour is to reign supreme in our hearts to the exclusion of every idol; and not only is every imagination and high thing to be cast down, and every thought brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, but every possession and every enjoyment is to be placed at his sovereign and absolute disposal. If an opportunity be not afforded us of following the martyr's example, we are ever to make it manifest that we cherish habitually the martyr's spirit, and that ours are the exalted sentiments expressed by the great Apostle: “What things are gain to me, these I count loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of his knowledge.”

There is, however, one important limitation, which it is of consequence to apply to every branch of this duty—I allude to the cause or purpose for which the sacrifice is

to be made, viz., *for the sake of Christ and his Gospel*. It is this, indeed, which stamps on it all its value, and alone renders it either acceptable to God, or profitable to the individual. And it is the more necessary to bear this continually in mind; because there never have been wanting those who manifested little reluctance in making some of the sacrifices required, but who, at the same time, rendered it too apparent that they were actuated by a far different motive. Capricious obstinacy, vain ostentation, and, above all, an ignorant, rash, and misguided zeal—the offspring of that pride which was not made for man, or of that wrath which worketh not the righteousness of God—have in every age had their deluded votaries—who, in sacrificing at the shrine of self, imagined they were doing God service. Be it ever remembered, however, that it is not the punishment, but the cause, which makes the martyr. Wantonly and causelessly to sacrifice either life, or property, or reputation, is not only foolish, but criminal. If the honour of our divine Master is not at stake, such sacrifices are an abomination in his sight; and instead of procuring to those who make them the rewards promised under so many illustrious forms “to him that overcometh,” they will only call forth the cutting and reproachful question, “Who hath required this at your hands?”

Such is a very general outline of the duty inculcated in the text; and from the frequency with which it is enjoined in Scripture, and the energy and earnestness with which it is urged, we may reasonably conclude, that it is second to none in fundamental importance or in practical effect. Revolting as it appears to men of the world, and hard as its performance really is to flesh and blood, yet, like all the other precepts of our gracious Lord, this is a most reasonable service; and He who has commanded, will strengthen the weakest of his servants to obey. Numerous inducements to practise this duty might be drawn from considerations foreign to those which are here presented; for, to be at the sovereign disposal of his God is the believer's duty and privilege, whether as a man or a Christian. Our Maker claims the life; and what claim can be stronger? What property can be more perfect than that which arises from creation? And as he not only made, but created, not only the works, but the materials; so it is his visitation which alone sustains, and his goodness which alone blesses existence. Surely, then, he has an absolute,

indisputable right to dispose of all beings as he pleases, and to require that they devote themselves exclusively and unreservedly to his services.

But towards the children of Adam he sustains a character still more endearing. To him he is not merely a creating, a preserving, but also a redeeming God. Of all his claims *this* is the strongest; and to those who have experienced the constraining influence of Christ's love, its charm and power are irresistible. Yes! the man who knows the value of the salvation of the Gospel, and who feels it in some measure as he ought, will bear with cheerfulness all that the Saviour prescribes—when he thinks how much the Saviour has borne for him, and how much he is still doing, and has pledged himself to do in his behalf. Disobedience to the kindest parent—ingratitude to a friend who has loaded us with favours—nay, the murderer of the man who has just rescued us from death—were nothing when compared to abandonment of His cause, who, when we were enemies, shed his precious blood for us. Think, too, Christians, that were he to call on you even to die in his service, it would only be an invitation to exchange this life of care and sorrow for a better—to put off your robes of corruption, and assume those of immortality; but He left the abodes of glory, the bosom of his Father, to become a houseless wanderer in our world of misery; and, after a life of the most complicated sufferings, to die for us a death the most cruel and ignominious. Let us but look with steady faith to Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself; and, instead of being weary or faint in our minds—instead of deeming any of his commands grievous, we shall be strengthened to lay aside every weight and the sins that do more easily beset us, and to run with patience the race set before us. The reasonableness of the duty here inculcated might farther be evinced by a consideration of the honour which faithfulness unto death brings to the Saviour and his cause—the noble pattern it exhibits to others—the proof it affords to the world of the efficacy of true religion—the examples of the worthies of past ages, who loved not their lives unto the death—the comparatively little value which to be set on the fleeting enjoyments of time, and the earnest desire experienced by every soul who has tasted of the sweets of heavenly communion—to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.

But the Christian is not left to the oper-

ation of these motives, powerful as they undoubtedly are. From condescension to his weakness, his heavenly Father is pleased to address his principle of self-love, and, by well-timed threatenings and promises, to awaken at once his fears and his hopes.

“He that findeth his life shall lose it.” Such is the threatening; and it speaks a language more awful in import than might at first appear. Even the negative denunciation which it contains, has about it an indescribable solemnity sufficiently alarming, but all its meaning we cannot express. We are reduced to inquire with Scripture, “What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul; and if the soul be lost, what shall a man give in exchange for it?” But it is not mere annihilation—that were, perhaps, an enviable doom. To lose the soul, includes all the *positive* misery implied in the mysterious term “the second death;” and all its horrors who can tell? Through the veil of deep obscurity, which shrouds from our view that place of torment, we cannot pierce; but sure we are that even among its miserable inmates it will be acknowledged, that if any suffer justly the punishment there inflicted, it is they who, by wilful apostasy from the best of masters, manifested their contempt of his great salvation, spurned from them its choicest blessings, and deliberately sealed their everlasting wo. And if any thing were wanting to complete that wo, it would be found in the bitter recollection of what they once were, and the thought of what they now might have been, had they, like a venerable martyr, considered in time, “that though life is sweet, and death bitter, the life to come is more sweet, and death to come more bitter”—had they, with the dread realities of eternity full in view, feared them less, who can only kill the body, and feared Him more, who they now know is able to cast soul and body into hell fire.

And what ought finally to shut us up to the assiduous performance of the duty we have been considering, is the reflection that there is here no alternative, no middle path to be pursued. The difference is that of being saved or lost. Finding our lives in this world, we shall lose them in the next; or, losing them here, we shall keep them unto life eternal. In this promise we cannot fail to remark an intimate connexion between the duty enjoined, and the reward annexed to it. Like every other gospel recompence, however, this reward is not of debt, but of grace. It is because their ascended

Saviour lives that his people shall live also; and if death be to the meanest of his followers gain unspeakable, what will it not be to those who have in his cause resisted unto blood, striving against sin? As in the heavenly firmament one star differeth from another star in glory, so in that higher and unchanging firmament, where the righteous shall shine forth as the sun, a conspicuous place will, doubtless, be assigned to those who counted not their lives dear to them, so that they might finish their course to the honour of their Lord. And what a blissful change! from a world of disorder and impurity, to a scene of uninterrupted peace and spotless holiness; from contempt and poverty, to unfading honours and durable riches; from pain and suffering, to the possession of the purest, sweetest delights; from a life short and transitory, to one that shall never end. Here, perhaps, they had no certain dwelling-place, and were destitute, afflicted, tormented; but there no cruel persecutor, no barbarous Nero, no blood-thirsty Herod, shall disturb their tranquillity or mar their joys. Here, perhaps, they were treated as the offscouring of all things, and held up as a spectacle of derision to the world, and to angels, and to men.

They liv'd unknown,
Till persecution dragged them into fame,
And chas'd them up to heaven. Their ashes flew—
No marble tells us whither. With their names
No bard embalms and sanctifies his song;
And history—so warm on meaner themes—
Is cold on this.

But their record is on high; their names are in the Book of Life; and standing before the throne of God, and serving him day and night in his temple, they shall with eternal honour be pointed out to their fellow-worshippers as they who "came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" and, in the presence and enjoyment of the Being whom on earth they most loved, their happiness shall be without limit and without end.

If, then, Christians, there were no other motive for the practice of the duty here enjoined than the prospect of this felicity, surely that were of itself enough to arouse all your slumbering energies to the performance. Is the prize of eternal life, think ye, not worthy of being contended for? Is no effort to be made, no privation to be endured, no suffering to be submitted to, for a share of that glory, the very least measure of which is described as an exceeding and eternal weight? Forbid it! every christian

sentiment, every noble aspiring feeling! And, therefore, in the diligent discharge of this duty, in whatever way you may be called on to fulfil it, do you too anticipate, and by anticipation enjoy the reward of faithfulness to the end—never ceasing to implore the promised aid of that Spirit, by whose strengthening influence the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire shall be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ; and so, having been made partakers of his sufferings, when his glory shall be revealed ye also shall be made glad with exceeding joy.

But to whom have I been addressing myself? not surely to those of you (if such there be) who in secret pretend not even to the name of Christians, and yet, with strange hypocrisy, here mingle in their solemn assembly; nor to those who, pretending to the name of Christians, yet show, by their habitual profaneness and sensuality, that they hardly deserve the name of men; nor even to those who, sufficiently decent in their outward deportment, are yet strangers to a change of heart and to the power of vital godliness. The only improvement which these can, in the meantime, make of our subject, is to inquire, in the language of an Apostle, (may the question seize fast hold of their conscience!) "If the righteous scarcely be saved—if the righteous be saved with such difficulty, where, *where* shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" But I have been addressing those in whom there is some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel, and them I would once more, in conclusion, affectionately exhort to decision in their religious course. Nothing great can be accomplished without effort. Dare, then, to be Christians in the face of all opposition; and if Christians you are resolved to be in deed and in truth, opposition you will assuredly encounter. It is true, indeed, that we are not now, like our forefathers, exposed to the open rage of malignant foes; the demon of intolerance does not, as of old, deluge our country with blood: thanks to a protecting Providence we can safely worship under our vine and fig-tree—none making us afraid! But though persecution may not now assume such appalling forms, let us not imagine that its spirit is utterly extinct; for then would the offence of the cross have ceased, and the world's friendship be no longer enmity with God. Will you live godly in Christ Jesus? Then be prepared for persecution—not the persecution

of violence, but of obloquy and reproach; be prepared for the scowl of disapprobation, the sneer of contempt, the laugh of scorn. If, in your intercourse with mankind, you are occasionally exposed to such treatment, on account of your religion, and yet do not bear up under it in the spirit of the text—if, in the society of the ungodly you feel ashamed of the Gospel—if the dread of being stigmatized as an enthusiast or a fanatic prevents you from saying one word for God's truth, and from making one effort for

God's cause—if, for trifles like these, you practically deny the Lord that bought you, say, how might you be expected to act were you called on to seize the crown of martyrdom, and yield up for Christ's sake not your worldly reputation only, but your life? “If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if, in the land of peace wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?”

SALVATION BY FAITH IN CHRIST;

A SERMON PREACHED IN HADDINGTON, ON THE AFTERNOON OF SABBATH TIME
23d FEBRUARY, 1834,

By the Rev. ANDREW RUSSELL, A.M.

“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”—ISAIAH xlv. 22.

IT is of unspeakable importance to have clear and scriptural ideas of the way of salvation. All other subjects, when compared with this, sink into utter insignificance, and, when weighed in the balance with it, are found to be “trifles light as air.” Mistakes may be made in reference to other subjects, without exposing us to much inconvenience; but mistakes on this all-important matter involve consequences the most tremendous, and may ruin our best interests for ever. It hence becomes a matter of the greatest moment, for the messengers of mercy frequently to call the attention of their fellow-sinners to this subject,—clearly to point out to them the nature of salvation, and the way in which they may obtain an interest in its blessings,—and earnestly to place before them the awful consequences that will follow its rejection, and the present peace and future happiness of those who receive it into their hearts by faith. And by so doing, they do not in the least expose themselves to the charge of dwelling upon truths which every one understands; for of these truths multitudes are utterly ignorant; and were it even the case that the generality were better acquainted with the way of salvation than they really are, it would still be their bounden duty to imitate the noble example of the Apostle of the Gentiles, who “determined to know nothing among men, but Jesus Christ, and him cruci-

we fear, have any proper conception of what it means. Were you to ask them what they understand by the term, the answer from most, perhaps, would be, that salvation is a deliverance from the wrath of God and the miseries of hell. These are all the ideas they attach to the expression; they think of nothing more when they wish to be interested in its blessings. But is this all that it implies? It is a blessed truth, that the sinner who believes in Christ, is rescued from the curse of a broken law, the wrath of an offended God, and the woes that await the finally impenitent in the regions of despair; but the half has not yet been told; much more than all this is comprehended in the salvation provided for sinners in the Gospel. It includes not merely deliverance from the penal consequences of sin, but from *sin itself*;—not merely deliverance from the guilt and condemnation of iniquity, but from its law and its dominion,—not merely deliverance from hell, but meetness for heaven; in one word, it includes not only justification, but *sanctification* also. Here, then, is the error into which so many fall. They think only of punishment and deliverance from punishment; they think not of sin as the *cause* of that punishment, and of deliverance from the former as the only way in which they can be delivered from the latter. Such persons never consider the impossibility of being saved from suffering without being saved from sin. God could not—we speak with reverence when we say it—God could not rescue a guilty creature from the penal

Salvation is a word frequently in the mouths of the hearers of the Gospel, but few.

consequences of transgression, and raise him to a participation of the happiness of heaven, without first delivering him from sin itself, and making him "meet to become a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light." Salvation includes, therefore, the sanctification of the soul by the blood and Spirit of Christ, as well as its justification in the sight of God on the ground of his imputed righteousness. To "be saved," then, is to be rescued from the condemnation of a violated law, to be delivered from sin, and hell, and wrath, restored to the favour of a justly offended God, blessed with the smiles of his gracious countenance, guided by his unerring wisdom, protected by his almighty power, cheered under trials by the consolations of his Spirit, supported by his presence in the hour of death, and at last admitted to the full fruition of those pure and exalted delights that await the ransomed spirit in the mansions above. Thus, to form an adequate idea of the gospel salvation, we must take in the wide range of blessings that are conferred upon the believer in time, together with all that inconceivable amount of happiness that is in reserve for him beyond the skies.

And of equal importance is the attainment of correct views respecting the medium through which this blessing—or rather this vast assemblage of blessings—flows to the human family. "Look unto me," says Jesus—for it is he who speaks in the text—"look unto me, and be ye saved." There is a natural leaning in the human breast towards something good in ourselves, as the ground of our acceptance with God; and in every age of the world, fallen man has been found trusting to his own doings for restoration to His favour. But foolish is the expectation, and vain the attempt. It is not "by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to God's mercy" manifested through a Mediator, that we are saved. Ever since the first guilty pair were driven from the bower of Paradise, all hope of return to the divine favour, on the ground of mere human obedience, has been cut off from the family of mankind. Had the Lord Jesus Christ not interposed in our behalf, and engaged to become our surety and substitute—had he not undertaken to endure the curse of a broken law, and to avert from our head the stroke of avenging justice—not an individual of the race of man could ever have been rescued from the miseries of hell, or permitted to enter the gates of heaven. But he "remembered us in our low estate,"

when there was "no eye to pity, nor hand to help;" and, though the object of unceasing adoration to all the hosts of heaven, he flew on the wings of love, and brought salvation to a rebellious world. Though the price of pardon was His blood, though our deliverance from sin and wrath was to be obtained only by infinite and unparalleled sufferings, he hesitated not, but left the abodes of bliss, condescended to become an inhabitant in this world of want and wo, took upon him the nature of man with all its sinless infirmities, sojourned and suffered upon earth, and at last "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," in order that he might vindicate the divine government in the eyes of an intelligent universe, and rescue fallen man from the misery and degradation into which sin had plunged him. Thus it was that he opened the channel of mercy to the guilty, paved the way for their return to the forfeited favour of God, obtained eternal redemption for his people, and proclaimed to all, that "God was now reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses."

Thus, you perceive, before guilty man could be received into favour with God, the claims of the law that he had violated must be answered, the honour of the divine government vindicated, and the righteousness of the divine character maintained. The truth, the justice, and the holiness of God were pledged for the punishment of the sinner, and stood—if we may be allowed the expression—as insurmountable barriers in the way of his salvation. Mercy could not be exercised in pardoning man's guilt till these attributes were fully satisfied by the atonement of an all-sufficient Mediator. That satisfaction was made when Jesus hung on Calvary. Then "the law was magnified and made honourable;" then "mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace embraced each other;" then the honour of the divine character and government was fully maintained and vindicated, and Jehovah was exhibited to view as "God and none else"—"the just God and the Saviour"—"the sinner's friend, though sin's eternal foe." Now he can listen to the utmost demands of his mercy without tarnishing the lustre of his justice, and all his attributes are glorified in the salvation of guilty man. Oh! what words can express the wisdom, the power and the love that are displayed in this wonderful scheme! Who that reflects on it can forbear exclaiming with the Apostle, "Oh! the depth of the riches both of

the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

The work of redemption being thus completed by the obedience and sufferings of the Son of God, and the way being widely opened for the restoration of the guilty to the divine favour, invitations the most unlimited are addressed to them in the Gospel, urging them to accept the overtures of mercy. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Now, in these invitations we may see the way in which the sinner becomes interested in the blessings of salvation. This, you perceive, is expressed by the terms, "looking," "coming," "believing," each of which denotes what we understand by the word *faith*. As, however, considerable diversity of opinion prevails upon the subject, it will be necessary to point out clearly the nature of that faith which is the appointed means of salvation.

The term employed in the text to denote this divine principle is, perhaps, the simplest and the most explicit which the inspired writers use upon the subject. "Look unto me." Here there is an obvious reference to the brazen serpent which Moses was commanded to erect upon a pole in the midst of the camp of Israel, that when any of the people were bitten by the fiery-flying serpents with which the wilderness abounded, they might *look* to it and be healed. In this institution there was a symbolical allusion to the atonement of Christ. To this effect is the language of our Lord himself: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here, you observe, the terms "looking" and "believing" are used as synonymous, and are employed to denote that faith by which the soul obtains an interest in the blessings of the Gospel. As the wounded Israelite was healed by *looking* at the serpent of brass erected for his deliverance, so the sinner is saved by *believing* in Jesus Christ as crucified on Cal-

vary to "take away the sin of the world." Now, can any simpler act be imagined than that of looking at an object? This the meanest capacity understands. It would be no difficulty to the children of Israel to comprehend the scheme of deliverance that had been provided for them; they knew that they had merely to direct their eyes to the brazen serpent, in order to be healed. And as simple, as easy, is the way of salvation. The sinner has merely to look to Christ in order to be saved. Jesus addresses to all the invitation, "Look unto me!" The sinner that looks to him is saved; he that will not look to him still remains under condemnation. "He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not, shall be damned." Can any thing be simpler than this?

We are well aware that a very different view is frequently given of the nature of that faith which saves the soul. Many in their fondness for metaphysical abstractions have attempted to define the meaning of the term, which, like every other simple operation of mind, is incapable of strict definition, and have thereby involved in impenetrable obscurity a subject which, viewed in the light of divine Revelation, is clear as day. To read some treatises on faith, or to listen to statements that are sometimes given as explanatory of its nature, one would be led to believe that before a sinner can possibly understand the Gospel, he must be intimately acquainted with mental philosophy, and able to trace the workings of his mind when he becomes the subject of that saving change, in the production of which faith is the mean. Such views of the divine principle we believe to be erroneous, and to have done essential injury to the cause of the Gospel, by leading the careless to regard it as a system of mysticism, and perplexing the mind of the sincere inquirer. For, can it be supposed that He who is infinitely wise should have suspended the salvation of millions of plain, unlettered men on something, the nature of which cannot be illustrated or understood without deep research and metaphysical learning? It is impossible. The nature of that faith which saves the soul is level to every man's capacity. It requires no superior acuteness of intellect or skill in dialectics to comprehend it; the most illiterate may understand it at once. Indeed, it is its simplicity that constitutes its supreme excellence.

The views which many entertain upon this subject are repugnant alike to Scripture and to reason. We never find the Apostles

troubling themselves or their hearers with learned definitions of faith, or with analyzing the mental operation which it denotes. You will search in vain for any thing of the kind in all the Book of God. Their uniform direction to sinners was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." And reason is as much opposed as Scripture to the intricate views of faith to which we have alluded. Every one knows that it is not at all necessary to acquire a knowledge of optics before we can use our eyes : the most illiterate person can employ his visual organs, so far as the mere *act of seeing* is concerned, as well as the most learned philosopher. Nor is it in the least necessary that we obtain thorough acquaintance with the laws that regulate the refraction and the reflection of light, in order to employ a telescope. The object we behold is conveyed through that instrument to the eye, and from the organ of vision to the mind, without our being able to tell how the rays of light are transmitted through it to the eye, and from the eye to the mind. We view a thousand objects daily, without giving ourselves the slightest concern about any such process. And the same is the case with the sinner when he believes the Gospel. He thinks not of any intellectual operation ; he thinks not of any definition of faith ; his thoughts are all occupied about the object he beholds. His eyes are fixed upon the Saviour of the guilty—the power and willingness of Christ to save him ; his suitableness to his case as a lost and condemned creature ; his unparalleled love and his supreme excellence, are the objects that absorb his attention. Had writers upon the subject always attended to this, the nature of saving faith would not have been involved in such obscurity.

"It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." This is the sum and substance of the testimony which God has given us concerning his Son ; this he requires us simply to believe—to give the same credit to it as we do to the testimony of one whom we regard as an honest man ; and he assures us that we shall be "saved with an everlasting salvation." Is not heaven's plan of saving sinners worthy of the highest admiration ? Can any thing be simpler than deliverance from sin through *faith* in the merits of a crucified Redeemer ? In one sense, indeed, the scheme possesses "a height and depth, and length and breadth," which none can comprehend—

which even angels endeavour to comprehend in vain ; but it is, at the same time, level to the meanest capacity.

"Oh, how unlike the complex works of man,
Heaven's easy, artless, unencumber'd plan !
No meretricious graces to beguile,
No clustering ornaments to clay the pile,
From ostentation as from weakness free,
It stands like the cerulean arch we see,
Majestic in its own simplicity.
Inscrif'd above the portal from afar,
Conspicuous as the brightness of a star
I seelike only by the light : *hev oive.*

The door of mercy, then, is now open, and all are invited to enter and partake of the blessings of salvation. "Look unto me," says the gracious Redeemer, "and be ye saved, *all the ends of the earth.*" "Come unto me, *all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" Do not these unlimited invitations teach the cheering truth that there is mercy for all, if they will accept of it in his own appointed way ; and that none are excluded from obtaining an interest in the divine favour but those who, by wilful unbelief, exclude themselves ? "All the ends of the earth"—men of "every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation"—sinners of every character and of every condition—are entreated to look to Christ. None need despair of obtaining mercy from God. The most abandoned among the sons of men—the guiltiest of the guilty—even he whose sins are of crimson die—is not left to despondency, but is taught to look up to Him with hope. Here is a foundation on which the very chief of sinners may build his confidence. Let none, then, be deterred from looking to Christ from a sense of their own unworthiness ; for, if salvation depended on human merit, who would ever enjoy its precious benefits ? Be assured that the more you *feel* your unworthiness, the more welcome are you at the throne of mercy. "Worthy is the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world ;" and if you direct to Him the eye of faith, a righteousness will be yours, which will render you worthy even in the sight of a holy God.

As there is a *false* as well as a true faith, it will be necessary before we close to point out *how we are to know when the saving faith of the Gospel is possessed by the soul.* This, my brethren, is an inquiry of no little interest ; because, although the Gospel is preached to all, all do not believe ; and because many who profess to believe in Christ, give mournful evidence that they are utterly destitute of his grace. How, then, are we

to distinguish false from true faith, and to ascertain whether or not we are in possession of that heavenly principle which sanctifies and saves the soul? The Scriptures furnish us with clear and sufficient data to decide upon the important matter. Faith is always productive of certain fruits, and by these its nature is uniformly known. It always manifests itself by certain efforts, which it produces on the heart and life. The Bible tells us that it "worketh by love," "purifieth the heart," and "overcometh the world." If, then, we are anxious to ascertain whether or not we are the possessors of the saving principle, we have only to inquire by instituting an examination into our hearts and lives, if it has really operated to the purifying of our souls—if it really works by love—and if it really enables us to rise superior to the customs of "the world that lieth in wickedness." These are the fruits of the Spirit's influences upon the soul. If they have appeared in us, we have reason to conclude that we are in possession of genuine faith; but if not, we give sad evidence that we are utterly destitute of it, whatever may be our profession, and however fair our character in the sight of our fellow-men. By this test, my brethren, let us try ourselves; and let us rest satisfied with nothing short of that faith which bringeth forth "the fruits of righteousness."

And we must be on our guard against the fatal error of those who view faith as forming part of the ground of salvation. "It is of *faith* that it might be by *grace*;" "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Let the man who imagines that there is any thing meritorious in faith, think what merit there was in the look which the wounded Israelite directed towards the brazen serpent. And can there be even the slightest shadow of it in the condemned sinner who believes in Jesus? No: salvation from first to last is a matter of pure unmerited mercy.

Are there any present in this assembly who have hitherto rejected the offers of

mercy? Long has the compassionate Saviour been addressing to you the invitations of the Gospel; but you have up to this moment despised him, and spurned away from you the most invaluable blessings. For your sakes he endured agonies inconceivable and unparalleled, in order to pave the way for your return to the favour of a justly offended God, and he now entreats you to accept of his mediation; O be persuaded to turn a deaf ear no longer to his beseeching voice! Long as you have despised him, he yet waits to be gracious. He is still standing with outstretched arms and saying, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." Delay not, I beseech you, till his patience be exhausted, for then "a great ransom cannot deliver you."

Alas! that so many should despise and reject the Saviour! Is it that they are in no danger? They may imagine that they are safe, but their danger is imminent. Ah! little do they know the curse that hangs over them, and the wrath that awaits the finally impenitent in the regions of despair; for, were they fully aware of their forlorn condition and melancholy prospects, they would neither give "sleep to their eyes, nor slumber to their eyelids," till they had secured an interest in Him who is "the refuge from the storm, and the covert from the tempest." Let me intreat the careless sinner to ponder deeply the Apostle's alarming question, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" The only way of deliverance from the wrath of God has been set before you; and if you reject this, how can you escape? Escape is impossible in any other way but through faith in Christ. Look to him, believe in him, come to him, and you will be safe and happy for ever. Once more, then, I address to you his warm invitations: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

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To whom all Communications should be addressed.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 10TH MAY, 1834.

SERMON by the Rev. PETER NAPIER., Glasgow.

SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT S. CANDLISH, A.M., Edinburgh. *Price 2*½**

**CHRISTS GLORY, AND THE GRACIOUS DESIGN OF HIS
ABASEMENT;**

A SERMON PREACHED

By the Rev. PETER NAPIER,

Minister of St. George's-in-the-fields.

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”—2 Cor. viii. 9.

If, within the compass of the inspired volume, there be any subject more fitted than another to awaken admiration in the mind, and elevate devotional feeling in the heart of a Christian, it must certainly be such a subject as that to which this text directs our attention.

The unspeakable glory of the Lord Jesus Christ as the eternal and only begotten Son of God—the unparalleled humiliation to which he submitted, in assuming the human nature, and thus becoming the Son of man—and the inestimable blessings accruing to myriads of our fallen race through his mediation, are topics on which no spiritually-enlightened mind can dwell, without the deepest interest and liveliest pleasure.

It is no doubt true, there are multitudes in the world who care for none of these things; whose minds are ever engrossed with other subjects, and who would listen with apathy, if not with impatience, to a discourse the professed object of which was to illustrate the glory or the grace of Christ. They see no loveliness in the character of the Redeemer for which he should be desired, they feel no delight in the contemplation of his excellencies, and they manifest no gratitude for the accomplishment of his arduous and generous undertaking on behalf of sinners.

Far different, however, (may I not appeal to many of you, my hearers,) far different from this, are the sentiments and feelings of those who have seen and tasted that the Lord is gracious.

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Knowing that all the blessings they enjoy at present, and all the hopes they entertain for the future, are derived from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; knowing that he humbled himself that they might be exalted, that he submitted to poverty and pain, that they might be enriched and made happy, that he died, that they might live, they feel they can never express the extent of their obligations to his love. They find their meditations on such themes, however frequently renewed and long continued, to be still delightful and profitable; they find the character and the work of Christ, invested with brighter and brighter glories, the more intimately they become acquainted with them; and these subjects, instead of becoming tiresome and insipid by frequent and familiar reflections, acquire such a growing interest in their minds, that every thing else is placed in subordination to them; and they cordially adopt the language of the apostle Paul as the best expression of their minds, “Yea, doubtless, and we count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Trusting that in this assembly of professing Christians, there may be not a few whose sentiments are similar to what I have now described, I proceed to the illustration of the text, not doubting that whatever imperfections may accompany my service, the subject itself will be found to possess such intrinsic interest as to command regard.

The personal glory of our Lord Jesus

2 II

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

Christ, the deep abasement to which he voluntarily submitted, and the gracious design of that abasement in regard to his Church, are the topics obviously suggested by the text. In attempting to elucidate them, it is my earnest prayer, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto us the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation, in the knowledge of Him, that the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, we may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the height and depth, and length and breadth, and to know the love of Jesus which passeth knowledge."

I. Let us, in the first place, fix our thoughts on what is suggested by the text respecting the original glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. "He was rich," says the Apostle.

It seems almost superfluous to state, what every reader of ordinary understanding must at once perceive, that the terms rich and poor are to be understood in this passage as having a metaphorical or figurative meaning. In the ordinary acceptance of the word, he is a rich man who has abundant treasures and extensive possessions, whose wealth can procure for him all the comforts and luxuries of civilized society, and give him a ready command of such honours and pleasures as the world can confer.

In this sense, however, it must be evident to every one, our blessed Lord was never rich. During no period of his abode in this world, did he possess that affluence, or occupy that rank that usually commands the respect of mankind. At his birth, he had no better accommodation than a stable, and no other cradle than a manger. In his youth, a laborious occupation, it is probable, furnished him with the means of subsistence, and the bread which he eat was earned by the sweat of his brow. In manhood, when he had entered into the duties of his public ministry, often was he indebted to the charity of benevolent friends for support, and often obliged to undergo all the privations and sufferings of the most abject poverty. The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, when the Son of Man had not where to lay his head. Indeed, if we trace him through the whole of his remarkable and eventful history, we shall find that from the moment of his birth, till the time he expired on the cross, he was literally and eminently poor, being entirely destitute

of the splendour, and enjoying none of the advantages of worldly opulence and distinction.

Admitting the truth of this statement, we may ask, what rational or consistent interpretation can be given to the Apostle's affirmation concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, if his pre-existence, or even, if his divine nature be denied. If our Lord was never rich in the common acceptation of the term, I confess I am utterly at a loss to conceive what meaning can be attached to the text, unless we believe that at some period he was in full possession of glory and honour, of which, at another period, he emptied himself in such a manner as to appear without any visible signs of them; nay, unless we believe what, indeed, the Scriptures expressly affirm, that "In the beginning he was with God, and was God;" and that the act of his assuming a human nature into a mysterious but real union with his divine nature, was such an obscuration or concealment of that majesty and dominion that properly belonged to him, as might fitly be described in the language of the Apostle : "He was rich, but became poor."

I am well aware that it may be said by those who dislike the wondrous things of the glorious Gospel of God, that the words of our text mean no more than that our Lord was enriched above the ordinary lot of the children of men, with intellectual endowments, and moral virtues, and miraculous powers; and that he possessed such distinguished excellence amidst much outward debasement, poverty, and suffering.

That Christ was rich, and eminently rich, in these respects, none, I presume, will be inclined to deny: but that this is the sense in which the Apostle here affirms that he was rich, none, I think, can believe, but such as are under the influence of a most inveterate prejudice. The text plainly speaks of two entirely different states or conditions belonging to our Lord at successive times; and the one state being put in direct contrast with the other, renders it morally certain that, whatever meaning be given to the term *rich*, the other term *poor* must have a meaning precisely the reverse. If the riches of Christ consisted in the things now specified, his poverty must have consisted in the destitution of them. But, when, we would ask, did Jesus ever assume such poverty? In other words, when did his knowledge cease, his virtue fail, and his ability to do wonderful works decline? when was he less

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remarkable for wisdom, or holiness, or power, than he was wont to be? when was the vigour of his mind impaired, or the purity of his soul defiled, or the strength of his arm unnerved? These are questions, which, in order to be answered, require only to be asked. Every one instantly perceives the absurdity involved in the supposition of the immaculate Jesus becoming deficient in holiness; and all must know that it is directly contrary to historical truth, to say that he was less eminent for mental or for miraculous powers at one period of his public life than at another. Even during the last and most distressful hours of his life he proved that he was as excellent in working as ever; for it was then that, by his word, he struck an armed band of his enemies to the ground; and it was then that he showed he was invested with the keys of the unseen world and of death, by promising a place in Paradise to the penitent criminal who hung by his side, and who, in the exercise of singular faith, prayed to him for mercy and favour.

Since, then, the condition of our Lord in this world was uniformly a condition of real poverty; and, however truly it might be affirmed of him as a man, that he was rich in the rare accomplishments of mind and heart which he possessed, yet, as he never, for a single moment, denuded himself of those qualities so that it could be said that in respect of them he became poor, it must be difficult to conceive how a change like that ascribed to him in our text can possibly apply to any period of his sojourning on earth. We cannot, after the most accurate examination of the history of our Lord, discover any such remarkable distinction between the earlier and the later periods of his life, as we should be led to expect, by being told that he made a transition from riches to poverty. We, therefore, conclude, and conclude with confidence, that when the Apostle here speaks of his having been rich, he refers not to any period of his existence in this world, but to the peculiar glory he possessed from eternity—that he alludes to that ineffable dignity and felicity which belonged to the *uncreated Word* before he was made flesh and dwelt among men. If this conclusion were in the least degree doubtful, it might easily be confirmed by the express testimony of Scripture.

Thus, for example, we find Jesus himself asserting “ That he came forth from the Father into the world, and that he was again about to leave the world and go to the Fa-

ther.” In an interesting conversation which he held with the Jews, he says, “ I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me;” and when he knew that some of those around him murmured at his doctrine, he said unto them, “ Doth this offend you? What, and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where *he was before!*” And in that beautiful and affecting prayer of intercession which is recorded by John in the 17th chapter of his Gospel, we meet with this remarkable petition, “ Now, O Father, glorify thou me, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”

But, besides these and many other passages of the same import that might easily be quoted, we find, if not so direct, at least equally decisive proof of the pre-existence and glory of Christ, in the peculiar manner in which the inspired writers uniformly express themselves, when adverting to his incarnation or sufferings. Do we not find that his assumption of the human nature rather than the *angelical* is represented as a voluntary act, and as an instance of infinite condescension? “ He took not on him,” says the Apostle to the Hebrews, “ he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham”—a mode of expression that seems plainly to intimate, that, with respect to the nature he assumed, he had the liberty and power of choice. And do we not find that his being made in the likeness of sinful flesh is represented as an unfathomable mystery; and that the giving of himself up to death in the room of the ungodly is set forth as an act of grace and love higher than any words can express, or any created mind conceive!

What interpretation may be given to such remarkable modes of expression by those who are puffed up with a vain conceit of their wisdom, or are bewildered with the speculations of a false philosophy, and enemies of the cross of Christ, I cannot pretend to conjecture; but I can scarcely suppose that any humble and candid inquirer after truth can read and consider them, without having the conviction irresistibly forced upon him, that the person to whom they refer, not only had a being before his birth as man, but that he was possessed of a nature essentially and infinitely exalted above the nature of every created being.

But here, my brethren, the subject becomes too magnificent to admit of illustration at our hands; and in attempting to

prosecute it, I cannot help feeling a humiliating sense of insufficiency. I feel, that though I were possessed of an understanding more vigorous, and an imagination more fertile than have ever yet adorned the brightest of the sons of science, and though I were able to speak with words more forcible, and an eloquence more fervid than have ever flowed from the tongue or pen of the most illustrious orator;—I feel, that though I had all the knowledge that ever centred in a human mind, and all the facility in communicating my ideas that I could wish, yet would I be altogether incompetent to the task of describing the glory, the ten-thousandth part of the riches of glory, which our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, enjoyed from everlasting, before the foundation of the world.

What could I tell of the riches of Him by whom all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers? What could I tell of the riches of Him who, from eternity, dwelt in the bosom of the Father, and before whom all nations were as nothing, yea, less than nothing, and vanity? The heavens were his throne, and the earth his footstool; honour and majesty were before him, strength and beauty were in his sanctuary. Thousands and tens of thousands of angels, who excel in strength, employed in his service all their powers, and found in his favour all their transports. Whosoever He pleased that did he, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and in all deep places, for his name alone was excellent, his glory above the earth and heaven. Rich, then, indeed he was, unsearchably, inconceivably rich; for, lofty and ardent even as the language of inspiration is, it seems to labour under such a theme, and brings us at length to this conclusion, “Who by searching can find out God; who can find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.”

II. Let us now, in the second place, consider the statement which our text gives concerning the deep humiliation to which the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, voluntarily submitted: “Though he was rich, he became poor.”

There is, unquestionably, something, not only surprising, but truly mysterious in the

idea here suggested. We know it to be one of the most obvious and indisputable of all truths, that with Jehovah, the one living and true God, there is no variableness, neither shadow of change. His essential glory cannot suffer diminution, his supreme felicity cannot meet with interruption, his absolute perfection cannot undergo alteration. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, else he could not be God.

It is evident, therefore, that we must not interpret the metaphorical language of our text so literally as to lead to the conclusion, alike unreasonable and unscriptural, that the eternal Jehovah changed his proper nature for the sake of redeeming guilty man; but, at the same time, we are not to interpret it so laxly as might lead to the rejection of such plain scripture declarations as the following, viz., that “He who in the beginning was with God, and was God, was made flesh, and dwelt visibly and personally among men: that he who declared himself to be one with the Father, and who thought it no robbery to claim for himself the same honour and homage from intelligent creatures that was due to the Father, yet appeared on earth in the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

Such passages, while they explicitly announce the glory of our Lord in his divine nature, do, at the same time, explain, as far as the language of man can explain such a subject, the nature of that humiliation to which he submitted, in becoming the Son of Man.

He who was the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person, became poor, not by divesting himself of any of the attributes of the Godhead; for that in the nature of things was absolutely impossible; but by condescending to such an infinite degree as to assume our imperfect nature into real, intimate, and inseparable union with his divine nature—vailing thereby, if we may so speak, the majesty and splendour that properly belonged to him, and giving to his creatures a less sensible manifestation of a glory really divine and eternal.

This, however, is a subject that so far transcends the highest conceptions we can form, that it is scarcely possible to speak of it in other terms than those dictated by the Holy Spirit, without darken-

ing counsel by words without knowledge. It is confessedly a mystery of godliness that God should be manifest in the flesh, and a mystery so great as to excite the admiration and furnish scope for the inquiries even of angels; and it is but a little portion of it, indeed, that seems to fall within the range of human comprehension, or to admit of illustration from human language. Such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high; we cannot attain to it.

The certainty of the fact, however, you must observe, is not in the slightest degree affected by the mysteriousness of its nature. We may be unable to explain, or even to comprehend, the manner in which He who is the everlasting Father was at the same time a child born, and He who is the mighty God was at the same time the man Christ Jesus. We may be unable to satisfy the pertulant inquiries of those who, seeking to be wise above what is written, are continually taunting us with the question, "How can these things be?" But if we can appeal to the testimony of Moses and the Prophets, or of Jesus and his Apostles, and add "Thus saith the Lord," we have, then, as I conceive, such authority for our creed on this point, as will fully satisfy every humble and unprejudiced inquirer after truth.

What, then, is the doctrine of Scripture, regarding the humiliation of Christ? It informs us, in terms which cannot be mistaken, what idea the inspired writer attached to the expression, "He became poor." It tells us, that He who was from eternity infinitely rich as the only Son of God, the Creator and Lord of angels and men, appeared at an appointed time on this minute part of his universe—not in the majesty of a sovereign, or the glory of a conqueror, but in the humble and despised form of a servant; that he occupied a station not among the princes and potentates of the world, but among the most destitute and despised of the people; that he enjoyed not the comforts of affluence and ease, but felt all the bitterness of want and toil; that he was received by those to whom he came, not with honour, but disgrace—not with acclamations of joy, gratitude, and praise, but with shoutings of scorn, derision, and contempt; in short, that he spent a life embittered by persecution, and oppressed with sorrow, and died a death accompanied with ignominy, and loaded with a curse: "Though he thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet he made himself of no

reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Well might the Apostle say, in the contemplation of so astonishing a transaction, he became poor; and well may we exclaim, while we consider it, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

III. But we now proceed, in the last place, to reflect on the gracious purpose of this abasement of our Lord: "Ye know, that for your sakes he became poor, that ye might be rich."

If our minds have been in any degree suitably affected by the topics already *advertised* to—if we have felt any elevation of soul while meditating on the riches of our Lord Jesus, as the only begotten of the Father—if we have experienced any thing like reverential wonder and awe, while tracing him by the eye of faith, from the throne of his glory in the heavens to the deep abyss of his humiliation, in the manger, on the cross, and in the tomb, O then, my fellow-Christians, to what an overwhelming pitch of admiration should our minds now rise, were it not that we are already familiar with the truth, when we come to be informed of the design of this marvellous transaction, "For your sakes he became poor!" And what are we that such a sacrifice should have been made on our behalf? Lord, what is man that thou shouldest be thus mindful of him? Alas! mean and insignificant enough, as a creature, but awfully degraded and despicable, as a sinful and rebellious creature. The evil of his natural condition is not exaggerated, when he is described, in respect of moral excellence, to be poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked.

This, believing Christians, was your case and your character by nature, even as it is still that of others who are living without God in the world. Yet, for your sakes, when thus alienated from God, enthralled by Satan, and having no hope; for your sakes, when you were outcasts from heaven, and every place of happiness—when you had no merit to recommend you, but were ungodly and without strength—yea, even when you were dead in trespasses and sins, did the Lord of glory submit to all the poverty and privation, to all the shame and

sorrow, to all the cruelty and contempt, we have feebly endeavoured to describe.

Yes, believers, it was for your sakes that He who was rich in all the glories of the Godhead, came down as a man of sorrows into this dark valley of tears! It was for you that he sustained in his own body on the tree the wrath that was due as the wages of sin. It was for you that he stood before the awakened sword of offended justice, and paid the rigid satisfaction that was required, viz., death for death. It was for you that he wept and prayed, and groaned and bled. It was for you that he lived and died, and rose again and revived, magnifying the law by his obedience, and opening a channel for the communication of divine mercy towards you.

For your sakes, believers, was all this done. But what is the extent of the benefit designed for you? Was this humiliation submitted to merely for the purpose of expunging the immense debt you had contracted, procuring a reversal of the awful sentence of condemnation you had incurred, and alleviating the anguish of the misery in which you were involved? To have done this, would have been to confer blessings of no mean value—blessings sufficient to call forth loud expressions of gratitude and praise; but, behold how far beyond this is the gracious and beneficent design of our Lord!

He became poor, not merely to relieve you from poverty and misery, but to raise you to the possession and enjoyment of the greatest affluence and the highest happiness. Through his abasement you are now exalted—through his poverty you are now made rich; but how rich, what tongue can tell, what imagination conceive!

You are enriched by the near relation into which you are brought unto God, whom you now regard as your God in covenant, your Father in heaven, your abiding friend, your satisfying and all-sufficient portion.

You are enriched with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, who, through the mediation of Christ, is given to you as a comforter, to be in you, and to abide with you, and by whose indwelling you are made partakers of faith, hope, humility, meekness, love, peace, joy, and all the other beauties of holiness.

You are rich from the interest you now have in all the exceeding great and precious promises of the covenant of grace, upon which you can rely with confidence in every

season of darkness and difficulty. You are rich, as members of the family of God, citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, and heirs of an inheritance that is incorruptible, and undefiled, and unfading. But where should we end, were we thus to go into detail? Time would fail to specify particularly the riches you have been made to inherit. "For all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours: for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

I have been addressing those who are presumed to know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and happy would it be for you, my hearers, were you all of this description; but I fear there may be some present, who, although they have heard and read much of a Saviour's love, and of the honour to which he exalts his people, yet to this hour have remained without part or lot in, so great and needful a salvation. In closing this discourse, I would expositately earnestly and affectionately with such persons.

Oh! my fellow-sinners, how can you make light of such love! How can you receive the offer of such grace in vain! What words can express your infatuation in neglecting a salvation so great! Why will ye die, when life is freely offered to you? Why will you remain in your native poverty and wretchedness, when all the unsearchable riches of Christ are held out for your acceptance? Were the poor beggar, whose mean fare can with difficulty supply the wants of nature—whose scanty raiment can but ill screen him from the inclemencies of the weather—whose mind is depressed by misfortune, and whose body is wasted by long abstinence and disease, were he freely and unexpectedly offered by some kind friend all the blessings which affluence can bestow, and all the honours that man can enjoy, would he hesitate a moment whether or not he should accept them? Would he indulge in a long train of reasoning as to the propriety of exchanging his rags for robes, his misery for happiness? No, certainly! With the utmost readiness and most lively joy would he embrace the offer; and, if possessed of the common feelings of humanity, long would he preserve, in indelible characters on his heart, the name and the inmemorial of his generous benefactor. But, to raise the beggar from the dunghill, and to set him among princes, affords but a feeble image of what Christ does for his people.

I beseech you, then, that ye receive not this grace in vain. Now is your accepted time. If you seek the Lord while he is near, we know that he will in nowise cast you out. We know the riches of his grace, that it is sufficient to pardon all your guilt, to subdue all your corruptions, to supply all your wants, to make you rich in every good thing in time, and perfectly blessed throughout eternity.

THE LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD TO BE ACCOUNTED SALVATION;

A DISCOURSE PREACHED IN ST. GEORGE'S, EDINBURGH, ON SABBATH EVENING,
9TH MARCH, 1834, AT THE REQUEST OF THE EDINBURGH YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY.

By the Rev. ROBERT S. CANDLISH, A.M.,

Assistant to the Minister of St. George's.

"Account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation."—2 PET. iii. 15.

THE long-suffering of God is his patience in bearing with the transgressors of his law—suspending the judgment of death, righteously denounced against them, with a view to their being yet persuaded to turn unto him and live. We have an instance of this long-suffering in the preservation of a guilty world, and the lengthening out of the days of sinners upon earth. Our own existence here is a proof of the long-suffering of God. By our apostasy we have forfeited all title to his favour and protection; we have provoked his holy displeasure; we have incurred his just sentence. That sentence, however, is not yet executed; it is held in abeyance: the day of vengeance is deferred and postponed: God is still slow to anger; he waiteth to be gracious, and, therefore, he extends our period of grace; for "it is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, and because his compassion fails not." So may every sinner say in reference to his prolonged enjoyment of life, and all its blessings, its privileges, its hopes. That *death*, which seals his doom for ever, has not yet overtaken him and cut him off in his presumptuous sin, is to him an example of the long-suffering of God; and so it may be said in reference to the world's continuance, and the delay of final judgment. It is this last instance of long-suffering that the Apostle, in this passage, has in view. He is guarding against an abuse of it; he predicts the rise in the latter times of profane and ungodly scoffers, whom he describes as laughing to scorn all denunciations of wrath, and saying, All things continue as they were—the Lord delayeth his coming. This, indeed, is the common tendency of our corrupt nature to put such an interpretation on the long-suffering of God, and to take encouragement

in sin from the abundance of his grace. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." "Soul take thine ease; to-morrow, *at least to-morrow*, shall be as this day." Such is the language of the evil heart of unbelief. Such it was in the time of God's judgment on the world by the flood. Men continued presumptuously impenitent, "when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah," eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, till the very day that Noah entered into the ark. And such, again, it will be in the time of God's judgment on the world by fire: "There shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" This, however, is not the interpretation of the long-suffering of God which Scripture warrants. Though judgment be delayed, it is not on that account the less sure. "These things," says the Psalmist to the wicked, "thou hast done and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will yet reprove thee."—"Our God shall come, and shall keep silence no longer." "The Lord," says our Apostle, in answer to the scoffer's question, "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Still "the day of the Lord *WILL* come as a thief in the night." And in our text he states what is the real design of God's long-suffering, and what use sinners should make of it; appealing for confirmation of his views to the authority of the apostle Paul: "Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to

the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you," perhaps in Romans ii. 4, "Thinkest thou, O man, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"—a maxim this corresponding exactly with that of our text, "That the long-suffering of our God is to be accounted salvation."

That *we* may not, then, like those whom the Apostle in this chapter denounces, who, in the judgment of fire, are to experience and to abuse the long-suffering of God, as their predecessors did in the judgment of the flood—that we may not turn that long-suffering, as manifested towards us, into an excuse for delay, or an argument of presumption, let us fix by God's blessing on our minds that account of it which our text teaches us to take; and, with this view, let us endeavour,

I. To ascertain the precise import of the statement before us, considered generally as a law, or rule, or principle, of the divine government.

II. To observe the application of this rule, in regard to those temporal judgments to which, as sinners, we are exposed; and,

III. To apply the rule in regard to the final judgment which awaits the guilty.

I. The statement of the text is to be considered generally as a law, or rule, or principle, of the divine government; and, in this view of it, it concerns us much to know its precise import—to inquire in what sense it is that the long-suffering of our Lord is to be accounted salvation. The long-suffering of God, then, is salvation, not directly in itself, but indirectly in subordination, and in reference to a fixed plan and purpose of salvation. It is not the long-suffering of God that saves a single sinner, but the love of God in Christ; and his long-suffering contributes to the sinner's salvation in no other way than by placing within his reach, and pressing upon his acceptance, the Gospel calls and the Gospel overtures of mercy. God has but one method of saving sinners—the method which his Word of Truth reveals. It is not his long-suffering that saves them, but that grace for the exercise of which, on their behalf, his long-suffering affords scope and space.

This is a very important distinction, and one which we are too apt to lose sight of. Sinners are exceedingly prone to place a vague reliance on the mere long-suffering of

God, without looking beyond it to that dispensation of mercy and truth, of righteousness and peace, to which his long-suffering is intended to direct them.

Examine your own hearts, my brethren, and you will see this tendency there. Look well to the foundation of your confidence before God. Is it an humble trust in his mercy through Christ, or a blind presumptuous calculation upon his forbearance? for this is precisely the difference between scriptural faith and practical unbelief—between the religion of the godly and the religion of the worldly man.

You live very much at ease in religion. You give yourselves little anxiety about your religious condition or your religious prospects. You feel yourselves tolerably secure in your intercourse with God. You have a comfortable feeling that all is well, and that you are free from any imminent or immediate danger. And yet you know, you believe, that you are sinners, and as sinners exposed to the justice of an offended God. He whom you have offended is, you know, a holy God, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. He is the Lord God Almighty—righteous in all his ways, terrible in his works. He has power to punish sin. He has told you that he *will* punish sin. As the righteous judge of all the earth, he cannot *but* punish sin. You have in his Word the most awful warnings, and threatenings, and denunciations. You have the certainty of a future judgment, and an endless state of retribution before you. And yet, notwithstanding all this, you have contrived so to pacify your consciences, and so to persuade yourselves of your safety, that you can take your rest in quiet, and go through your daily business cheerfully and contentedly, with scarcely a single anxious or uneasy thought about the terrors of the Lord, or the hazard of your souls.

Now, how is all this accomplished? How is this enviable feeling of security attained? Is it the result of steadfast faith in Him who so loved the world as to give up his Son to the death? Is it because you believe from the heart that God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing sin? Is it because you know that grace which justifies freely through the redemption that is in Christ? Is it because you have seen in his cross at once the guilt of your sin and the love of God to sinners? Is it because you are looking to Him whom you have pierced, and looking to Him as pierced for

you? Is this the reason why you feel secure? Is this the ground of your confidence, your peace, your hope? Then, brethren, happy are ye. Ye have found that peace which the world cannot give, and which the world cannot take away. Your confidence rests on a foundation which nothing can shake—the love of God, of God manifest in the flesh. Hold fast your confidence and rejoicing of hope. Let no sinful doubts and fears, no worldly cares and anxieties, disturb your heavenly serenity. It is a reasonable, a safe, a scriptural joy that you feel—the joy of reconciliation to God your Father, and peace through the blood of Christ, and the Holy Spirit dwelling in you. You may feel yourselves secure, for, brethren, ye **ARE** secure in the favour and protection of Him whom you have chosen as your friend. Only continue to love and serve Him as a friend, and see that ye do not suffer yourselves to be lightly beguiled, or despoiled of that peace which the Saviour left as a parting legacy to his disciples—that peace which is the blessedness of the man whose “iniquity is pardoned, whose sin is covered, to whom the Lord imputeth not transgression, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” But, then, be very sure that there is no guile in your spirits: take good heed that ye be not deceiving yourselves; for may it not be said of some, it is to be feared of many among you, that if you were to confess the truth even to yourselves, you would have to acknowledge that all your reliance is not on the saving mercy and sanctifying grace of God, but on his long-suffering patience. You regard his forbearance not merely as putting salvation within your reach, but as being in itself a sufficient security. You are at ease, perhaps, and at peace in religion, not because you have sought and found an interest in his mercy through Christ, but because you have learned to set his judgments at defiance—not because you expect deliverance from danger, but because you feel not the reality, the extent of your danger—not because you have attained good hope through grace, but because, by a wretched delusion, you have got rid of all your fears: so instead of seeking to be saved from wrath, you seek to persuade yourselves that there is no wrath at all from which you need to be saved; and instead of resorting to Christ as your hiding-place from the tempest, you try to satisfy yourselves by fancying the tempest almost a calm; for you cannot believe the peril to be so *very* urgent.

Your God is too mild, and pitiful, and tender-hearted, to be *very* strict in visiting your transgressions. He will overlook them as venial offences, natural and harmless frailties; his judgments thus far suspended will be postponed indefinitely and for ever. He is long-suffering *now*; he will be long-suffering to the end, since, surely, he never can be so harsh and unrelenting as actually to carry into effect those denunciations of wrath which ought, no doubt, to strike a salutary terror into our hearts; but which God, the merciful God, never could seriously intend to act up to.

But what, my friends, what is this but turning all the wisdom of God's moral government into the mere dotage of blind and capricious fondness! You conceive of the high and Holy One as if he were altogether such an one as yourselves, ay, and the weakest too among yourselves! You think that, like an earthly parent, infirm and irresolute of purpose, though he may utter his voice and lift up his arm he will never have the heart to strike; that, however he may frown, and however he may threaten in a moment of wrath, yet, at the last, when it comes to the execution of his threatenings, he will relent!—he will be melted to compassion, and will suffer all the order and economy of his household to be deranged, and all the peace and harmony of its inmates to be disturbed, and all his wise and good regulations to be set at defiance with impunity, merely because he cannot summon courage to inflict deserved pain, and cannot bear to see a darling child in tears.

And where is it, my friends, where is it that you find any warrant for such unworthy views of the character of God? Where is it that you find any indication of this supposed reluctance—this sensitive, this weak reluctance, to put down with an arm of power the rebels against his authority, to visit sinners with the doom which their sin provokes? Not within you, not in your own hearts, for there you find only an extinguishable dread of retribution; your own hearts condemn you, and God is greater than your hearts. The voice of conscience, which is the voice of God, speaks to you not of mercy, but of judgment; it bids you tremble at the uplifted rod; it gives you no encouragement to calculate on the weakness of the hand that holds it; it denounces well-deserved wrath against your sins; it says not a word, it gives not a hint of that relenting fondness which would arrest the

course of justice ; it warns, it threatens, it does not comfort ; it excites, it does not allay the fears of guilt ; and however for a time it may be silenced, or stifled, or suppressed, by the noise of worldly ambition, or the arguments of worldly sophistry, yet, at the last, it will speak out. In solitude, in sickness, in sorrow, it will speak out, when error, and deceit, and delusion are passing away, and the severe and naked truth is beginning to appear, and there comes an anxious awakening, and a sad foreboding, and a fearful looking for of judgment. Not in the world around you : it is not there that you see any indication of God being too lenient to inflict evil for evil done ; for there you see pain, and suffering, and sorrow—you see ruin, ravage, and desolation—you see death and all its train of attendant woes marching through the crowded ranks of men, their course marked by *sighs, and tears, and groans*—and all this inflicted because of sin. Not in heaven above ; for there you find unfallen creatures happy, *only* because God's holy law is honoured, and its sanctity upheld ; and you cannot think that, in a fit of ill-judged compassion, God would put to hazard all the happiness of the blessed, by any weak relaxation of his authority, by suffering his law to be outraged, or transgressors to escape unpunished. Not in hell ; for there you have actual proof of the righteous judgment of God, and the awful FACT revealed scatters to the winds your loose and vague surmises and presumptions ; and, instead of guessing what may be, you see what has been ; and the torments of apostate spirits who inhabit the place, where God hath forgotten to be gracious, testify how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God. Not in the law, my friends : it is not in the law that God appears as a Being of fond and capricious lenity ; for there He speaks in a voice of thunder, sternly enforcing his authority. No ; nor is it in the Gospel that there is any sign or symptom of his wanting resolution to enforce the penalty of his law : *He spared not his own Son* ; and how, then, can you think that He will spare those who crucify that Son afresh, and despise his offered love ?

All these considerations may serve to convince you that the long-suffering of God is not to be interpreted as if it were a proof of weakness or irresolution, or imbecile and capricious lenity. It might, indeed, be so interpreted, did we not consider the purpose

to which it is subservient. The fact of God sparing you *now* would, of itself, encourage the belief that he might spare you ; did he spare you merely because he is too merciful to punish. But it is *not* so. All within you and around you—all nature and providence—heaven and hell—the law and the Gospel, testify that God is not too merciful to punish. If he spare you, then, it is not from the mere blind impulse of soft, relenting tenderness ; it is with a farther design in view ; it must be for a special reason, both holy and gracious, according to a fixed and definite plan of justice, as well as mercy. Without some reason, indeed, some wise and good plan and purpose to serve, the righteous Judge of all would not, he could not, have spared the guilty even for an hour. He could not even in pity delay the execution of the threatened penalty one instant after it had been incurred. His holiness, his justice, his truth, his goodness concerned to uphold good laws for the good of the universe—all the attributes of his character, all the principles of his government, alike forbid such an exercise of forbearance. The uplifted arm *must* fall ; the threatened judgment *must* take effect.

But that plan of salvation which indicates the righteous authority of God, while it provides mercy for sinners, that plan justifies, and such a plan *alone could justify*, the long-suffering of our God. He spares men now, that this plan may be accomplished ; and, accordingly, the apostle Paul tells us, in the Epistle to the Romans iii. 24, “ For this very end God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation for our sins, to declare or justify the righteousness of God in remitting or passing by the sins of men in all past ages through his forbearance.” His forbearance, therefore, now seen to be the result, not of mere weak and doting compassion, but of a wise, and just, and holy plan of salvation, fitted by a propitiation made for sin to illustrate all the glory of his character, while it opens a way, without compromising his justice, for the return and reconciliation of his lost and rebellious children.

The long-suffering of God, then, is to be accounted salvation, not because it gives us any security in itself, but because it gives us the opportunity of being secure in Christ, through faith in that great propitiation of his, which alone renders long-suffering in the government of a just and holy God a legitimate, a possible exercise of love. The

long-suffering of God does not save us. It only puts us and preserves us in a situation in which we may be saved. We are not safe, merely because God is long-suffering; but God is long-suffering, that we may be saved.

On this point, my brethren, be not deceived. Consider not God as acting merely from the impulse, so to speak, of personal feelings of compassion, when he spares. Regard Him as sustaining a public, an official character, in which he has high authority to vindicate, and good government to maintain. True, he is full of tenderest feelings of pity to *you* personally, to each of you individually; but, then, as a judge may not indulge or gratify his personal feelings as a man, without reference to his state and duty as a judge upholding law, and order, and sacred reverence, so God, in his compassionate regard to you, lays not aside his regard to the claims of his own sovereignty, and the sanctity of his own administration. The very giving up of his Son to be sin for you—the proof, the amazing proof, of his personal concern for you, is the proof also of his concern for the honour and the majesty of that justice which was to be preserved unblemished and untarnished at such a cost. It is in the character of a just God and a Saviour that he is long-suffering; not in relenting pity, reversing his sentence of judgment, but only so far suspending it, as to allow of the sinner's escape in the way which he has himself appointed, as *alone* consistent with the high integrity of his government. This way of escape he now, in his long-suffering, shows to *you*. This great salvation he now offers to *you*. Be not so infatuated as to think you may dispense with it. Again we warn you. The love of God, in which you may surely and confidently trust, is manifested, not in his sparing you, but in the purpose for which he spares you—which purpose is, that, according to the Gospel plan, you may be saved. His long-suffering is a proof that he would have all men—that he would have *you*, to be saved. For why else did he at first abstain from visiting sin with the immediate doom of death? And why does he still abstain from cutting you off in your sin? But because he would have you repent, he is not willing that any—that you, should perish. His long-suffering confirms his tender and affectionate voice of expostulation: “Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? I have no pleasure in the death of him that

dieth, but rather that he should turn from his ways and live.” Still if you would live, you must turn; if you are to be saved at all by the long-suffering of God, it must be in the way of his own appointment, through faith in Him whose blood cleanseth from all sin, whose Spirit sanctifies wholly. If the long-suffering of God save you not in this way, assuredly it will give you no security in any other. If his goodness lead not to repentance *now*, then, however you may calculate on his forbearance, and placability, and mercy, being indefinitely extended; yet, even the Gospel, if you would believe it, assigns a law and a limit to that mercy. And O, beware! lest when the time of retribution comes, as even on the terms of offered grace come it must, and the season of grace has passed, as it is passing how certainly, O my brethren, how rapidly and insensibly away, you find too late, to your utter dismay and despair, that ye have exhausted all his patience—that you have been but treasuring up unto yourselves wrath against the day of wrath; and, in that hour of the revelation of the righteous judgments, ye hear the voice of wisdom, that very wisdom whose much long-suffering ye have abused, “Because I called, and ye would not hear; I stretched out my hands, and ye despised my counsel; I also will mock at your calamity; I will laugh when your fear cometh.”

II. This law stated in our text—this rule, or principle, or maxim of the divine government, that the long-suffering of God is to be accounted the salvation of man, may be applied to the case of temporal judgments, and may explain the Lord's method of dealing with us in regard to those evils to which, even in this life, as sinners we are exposed.

For the correction and reformation of men, to remind them of their sin and their liability to the doom of sin, God sends his judgments abroad on the earth; but he sends them for the most part tardily, and as it were reluctantly, after many threatenings, and warnings, and delays. And this long-suffering of his is meant to be, and by his grace often is, the salvation of his people, either, first, by giving them time to avert the judgment, or second, by preparing their minds to profit by it. In either case, whether it tend to preserve men from temporal evil, or by means perhaps of that very temporal evil to preserve them from evil far greater; in either view, the long-suffering of God is emphatically salvation.

I. God, in sending temporal judgments,

often gives previous warning, and interposes delay, that by timely precautions they may be averted; and in this sense his long-suffering is to be accounted salvation.

God, we know, does not afflict his people willingly or unnecessarily. He sends judgments and calamities, not at random, but for a special purpose; and when that purpose can, in consistency with his wise and good government, be otherwise effectually accomplished, we may be very sure that he will not send them. Thus God often sends affliction to reprove sin, and to bring the sinner to repentance. Now, if without the affliction this end be attained, if the sin be forsaken, if the sinner repent, if the denunciation of the punishment produce all the good and salutary effects which the punishment itself is intended to produce, then there is reason to believe that God may, in many cases, be able to dispense with the infliction of the punishment altogether. Not in all cases; for there may be cases in which the ends of his just government may not be fully answered by the mere repentance of the sinner, unless, in his own person, some demonstration be given of the evil of his sin and the displeasure of his God. In such cases it were plainly unreasonable to expect that, in mere compassion to the individual, the course of justice should be arrested, or the course of nature changed. The repentance of the sinner does not of itself suffice for his deliverance from eternal judgments. There must be a signal token of God's hatred of sin given in the very method of his forgiving it. And on the very same principle, in reference to the present life, the repentance of the offender being insufficient to prevent the ill effects and the ill example of his offence, he may fitly be required, both for his own good and for that of others, to submit to some visitation of the righteous displeasure of God. Accordingly, in fact, we find in the common experience of the world, that the repentance of the sinner does not always save him from the afflictive consequences of his sin; but he is compelled to bear about with him, in his body or in his soul, the sad results of early profligacy or crime, long after he has been led to see his guilt, and to seek and find forgiveness in the Gospel. Still, when God

sees it to be proper, (and he is the sole judge of the propriety,) he *may* avert altogether the judgment of which the warning has been attended to, and we are justified in hoping and believing that he *will*.

It is on this sound and rational principle that we explain the *conditional* threatenings of God, of which we have examples in Scripture. When he denounces severe penalties against offending nations or individuals, he reserves to himself the sovereign prerogative of remitting these penalties, should they turn out to be unnecessary. Thus he threatened of old the Ninevites; yet in his long-suffering he waited forty days, and they, taking advantage of that long-suffering, found it to be salvation. And this is our warrant for thinking, that by prayer and penitence we may turn away from ourselves the judgments of God. It is not that we conceive our God to be one, on whose fond and easy placability we may work by mere entreaty and persuasion, who will weakly change the plan and purpose of his providence, merely at our request and for our accommodation, for no better reason than because we ask him. On the contrary, our hope rests on this very persuasion, that he does nothing without a reason, and that he may have a reason quite as good and sufficient for remitting as for denouncing punishment, for averting as for sending judgment. We build upon his own assurance that he does not afflict men willingly, but only when he judges it necessary, on account of sin, for the good of the sinner himself, or of others whom his fate may warn. For such ends, it may be necessary to hold out the near, the immediate prospect of trials and calamities as visitations for sin; and, yet, before the time comes, which God in his long-suffering has fixed for their actual inevitable infliction, the necessity may have ceased, the state of things that called for such visitations may have been changed; and God, who sees the end from the beginning, taking into account all, even the remotest consequences of the proceeding, and acting on the principles of infinite wisdom, may see a better purpose to be served by remitting, than by enforcing the sentence of severity, by mercy than by judgment.

(To be concluded in our next.)

GLASGOW:—W. R. M'PHUN, PUBLISHER, 86, TRONGATE,
To whom all Communications should be addressed.

THE

SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 17TH MAY, 1834.

SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT S. CANDLISH, A.M., Edinburgh. *Price 2d.*
SERMON by the Rev. ALEXANDER TELFER, Johnstone.

A Sermon preached by the Rev. ROBERT S. CANDLISH, A.M.—Concluded.

THEN cease not, brethren, day nor night, to ply them with earnest and reiterated supplication, and to deprecate the woes which you are conscious you deserve, but which yet you know that God is not willing to inflict. What though some poor and pitiful wrangler, some wise man of this world, some earth-born and earth-nurtured sophist may remind you of your insignificance, and tell you of the absurdity of expecting to change Heaven's determination by your weak voice—to arrest the thunders of Almighty power by your single arm! Oh! be not ye beguiled of this your privilege of appeal to God, through philosophy and vain deceit. You feel that it is *natural*, you see now that it is *rational*, you are sure that it is *scriptural*, to believe in God as the hearer of prayer. In a subject so far above you as the plan of providence, there may be difficulties which you cannot solve, objections which you cannot answer; but banish all the subtleties of human speculation, and try the truth of the Word and promises of God. No! my friends, it is not the part of faith to sit down in the contentment of indolent fatalism, as if under the decree of absolute, and arbitrary, and uncontrollable necessity. It is not your part to behold unmoved the march of the divine judgments, and to wait your doom in sullen resolution, as if there were no possibility of change either in your own hearts or in the providence of God. Rather believe that the Most High ruleth in the affairs of men; He directs the storm which he himself raises: He holds at his own disposal the instruments of his wrath, and is ever ready to check their fierce career: the angel of destruction is subject to him, and stays his hand when He says it is enough. When God then raises his arm to strike, be ye not in haste to conclude that the stroke is inevitable. His judgments may be near you—at your doors; yet still he may mercifully

interpose. Only remember, if he is to arrest the course of his judgments he must have a reason for doing so; and what reason can he have, save that the necessity has ceased on account of which these judgments were denounced? Your sins provoke the severe visitations of God; let these sins be put away; let the work of reformation go on, and then the work of judgment may be spared. Consider that God sends his trials for a special purpose. Let that purpose be fulfilled in you. Do your part to render harsher measures needless, by taking warning in time, while yet his dealings with you are mild and merciful, and, ere proceeding to inflict his wrath, he yet waiteth to be gracious.

But, 2d. There is another way in which the long-suffering of God is manifested in the sending temporal judgments. He gives us time, not perhaps to avert them altogether, but yet so to prepare for their coming, that, when they *do* come, they shall come as fatherly chastisements, not as judgments in fact at all, but as mercies. And, in this sense—a far higher and more important sense than is implied in the *removal* of any temporal calamity—the long-suffering of God is to be accounted salvation.

You are quite at liberty, my friends, to pray against the evils of life, even those evils which your sins may have most justly deserved. Only pray in submission to the wisdom of Him who alone can know what is right for himself, what is good for you. It may seem to you that the purpose for which such judgments need to be sent, is already accomplished when you repent; but there may be other purposes which you can but imperfectly comprehend, for the accomplishment of which it may be requisite still to let the judgment take its course. Your prayer, therefore, may not be answered in the very sense that you might naturally wish. The evil against which you pray,

and pray honestly, *may* come. Still count not your pains lost, your prayer vain. It *will* be answered, if not in the way that you might choose, in some other way far better for you. The long-suffering of God may not end in your being actually saved from temporal judgments, yet, if it give you time to prepare for them and to profit by them, it will be still more truly to your salvation; it will save you, not perhaps altogether from pains and sorrows, but yet from all their bitterness, by making them no longer harbingers of wrath, but heralds and ministers of grace; it will not save you from death, but it will save you from the *sting* of death; it will not save you from the grave, but it will save you from that which gives the grave its victory. And is not this a great salvation, which may be yours, my friends, if you improve aright the long-suffering of God, and remember your Creator in the days of your youth, ere the evil days come? These days *will* doubtless come; but to *you* they will come fraught with blessings, and hopes, and joy unspeakable. Ye may offer the Saviour's prayer, "Let this cup pass from me!" but it must be in the Saviour's spirit of resignation, "Thy will be done." And this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you may be spared if possible the discipline of life's severer trials; or that if still these trials come you may be prepared to meet them, and to meet in them your God in peace.

III. But the most important view for us to take of the maxim of our text, is in its application to that judgment of eternal wrath in the life to come, to which we stand exposed. Here it is especially that the long-suffering of our Lord is to be accounted salvation. In this view of it, our text suggests the true solution or explanation of that most curious and perplexing of all enigmas—the present state of sinners on the earth seeming to be tolerated by a holy and righteous God. It is a state, we now see, in which God is long-suffering that man may be saved. He has seen a whole race of his intelligent creatures depart from their Creator. He has been constrained, by a just regard to the principles of good government, to pronounce sentence against them. But he suspends the full execution of the sentence till, first of all, a wise and gracious experiment be made. He has sent his Son; it may be they will hear him; at least the experiment shall be fairly made. There is a plan and purpose of bringing still many sons and daughters unto glory; and till

these elect ones be gathered in, the world is spared and preserved.

Thus God deals with men as sinners who have incurred his wrath, but upon whom, first of all, a milder discipline of mercy is to be tried, as criminals convicted, condemned, yet under respite.

Be it remembered, however, it is only a respite, and a respite which does not by any means, of course or of necessity, imply an ultimate reprieve. You are spared for a little, but you are spared for a particular purpose; and if that purpose be not attained, there is no other resource—the sentence must take effect. Then do not mistake or misinterpret the goodness of God, that goodness which preserves you and loads you every day with benefits, as if it were a proof that God regards sin with indifference, or the sinner with complacency. No! It is only a proof that he would have the sinner to be saved. He makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good; he sends his rain on the just and the unjust, all alike. Is this a proof that they are all alike and equally the objects of his love? The good and the just he spares and blesses, because in his favour they are already safe; the evil and the unjust he spares and blesses too, in order that they *may be* saved. The long-suffering of God to sinners does not prove that he considers them his friends, but only that he would gladly and willingly *make* them so. It is not in itself salvation; on the contrary, it *may* turn to your greater condemnation; for all the instances of God's long-suffering which you meet with—the mercies which are new to you every morning, the many comforts of your lot, your many spiritual advantages so mercifully continued to you, will surely, if unimproved, rise up in judgment against you. But if, instead of stopping short at the means, you go on to the end; if, instead of calculating on the delay of wrath, you seek to be delivered from wrath altogether; if the benefits with which the Lord loadeth you from day to day lead you to bless him as the God of your salvation, then in your ease the long-suffering of God will not have been shown to you in vain.

And here, in addressing those especially among you who are enjoying the blessings of youth, health and strength, we would bid you seriously consider what God means in bestowing and continuing such blessings. The apostle Paul desires Titus, himself probably a young man, to exhort young men to be sober-minded. And certainly there can scarcely be any truth more fitted to

awaken sober and solemn thought in all of us than this of our text—that we live under a dispensation of long-suffering preparatory to a dispensation of judgment. Oh! how ill-timed and out of place does the loud and noisy laugh of giddy and idle gaiety appear, while the sword is hanging over us suspended by a single thread, and the angry storm is gathering and lowering all around. How does it ever remind us of the wise man's bitter irony, “Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the light of thine eyes and after the counsel of thy heart; but know, that for all these things God will call thee into judgment.” In youth we are very apt to think lightly of the righteous displeasure of our God; we reckon much on his indulgence, and take liberties as with a kind and lenient father. Learn, my friends, to view him as a just God and a Saviour, dealing bountifully with you, not that you may live contentedly upon his bounty as strangers and rebels, but that once more ye may become his servants, his friends, his children. For now in the maxim of our text, you have got a key by which to interpret the book of God's providence in respect of yourselves. Here is a very interesting and important light in which you may view all those common mercies and comforts, as well as those special deliverances, which are instances in your case of the long-suffering of God. You are apt to rest satisfied with such benefits as in themselves are very valuable and welcome, without considering the design for which they are conferred, the end which God seeks in conferring them. You reckon yourselves happy in having escaped the natural consequences, the due reward of your folly; and, having been preserved so long in the enjoyment of safety, prosperity and hope, do you pause to ask yourselves why it is that you are thus preserved? Is it on account of what you *have* been? Is it on account of what you *are*? No! but on account of what you *may be*. You have no claim to urge on the favour and forbearance of God; you have no cause to show why you should be so mercifully dealt with; you are not more worthy, you are not more innocent than the many whom you have seen cut down prematurely in their sins; yet others are taken and you are left. Your companions in guilt have gone to their portion, and yet *you* are spared; and why is it so? Is it because you have better used the gifts and bounties of your God that, though forfeited by others, they are yet continued in

such abundance to *you*? Alas! here you have but little to boast of. You have reason to thank God that you are dealt with not according to your own merit, but according to his great mercy. You have been endowed with high powers and faculties of soul; these you have perverted and abused, by devoting them to the world and not to God; yet these are spared to you, though it had been no unjust, and, brethren, no very uncommon punishment, that you should have been deprived of them all and consigned to idiocy or madness. You have wasted your health, the first of earthly blessings, in riot; you have recklessly put to hazard in your selfishness all the social charities of life—its dearest and best joys by far, and yet these are spared to you; you have had means and opportunities of improving which you have neglected: parental instructions, advices, prayers, tears, you have disregarded; the Sabbaths of the Lord you have misspent, his Word you have despised, his Spirit you have resisted; and yet, still you have his Word to teach you, and his Spirit striving with you: you have provoked the Holy God by your vice or your folly, and yet you yourselves are spared.

And can you think that all this forbearance is intended to serve any trivial purpose? Is it for nothing that, from among so many victims of their own sin, God singles out you to be monuments and miracles of his mercy? Is he seeking merely your present ease in all this? Is he not seeking your return to himself?

Put, then, my brethren, the mercies and deliverances which God in his long-suffering vouchsafes to you to their proper use. Let them be as ambassadors or messengers from God inviting you to repentance. Hear the voice which they utter. Receive the grace which they offer. They preach to you; they preach the Gospel; they sound the Gospel call; they tell you that God waiteth to be gracious, that he has a work of love to fulfil in you, and therefore it is that he spares you. Think it not enough, then, to be the objects of God's long-suffering merely, if ye attain not his salvation. What matters it that ye are delivered from temporal evil, if you are not preserved from that which is eternal? what though the body be safe from pining disease or impending dissolution, if the soul be still sunk in corruption, and still liable to eternal death—that ye are freed from the racking pains of a withered and distorted frame if ye are not freed from the wretchedness of guilt? From sickness, from sorrow, God has often saved you. Has he

saved you from sin? its anxieties, its terrors, its power? He has been your help in trouble, your comfort in distress. Have you made him your refuge in the hour of the soul's sore trial? your shelter from the cold keen blast of its guilty fears, the fierce tempest of its guilty passions? Be not any longer unmoved by the all loving-kindness of your God. But if ever, in danger, you have found unexpected aid, or in the dark abyss of despair have seen the light of hope and joy triumphantly arise; if memory retain any traces of helpless childhood defended, and youth preserved or rescued from its own wild excesses—of manhood's follies, too, retrieved, and heavy losses repaired, and threatened, courted ruin suddenly averted—of means wonderfully supplied in the very time of need, unlooked for strength imparted, and the faint heart revived, and kind friends raised up, and the wind of adversity tem-

pered to the shorn lamb, all by that Providence which we in our folly misname accident and fortune; if there be a single evil which you this day especially dread, and from which this day, not by your own might and wisdom, but by the good help of a patient God, you are secured; then from another evil also seek, by the grace of the same God as a Saviour, to be this very day secured. You see thousands around you swept away by the awful visitations of God, not because they are sinners more than others—more than you, but that you may have space for repentance, and may find the long-suffering of your God to be your salvation. Wherefore, repent ye lest ye all likewise perish. Ye are made whole from bodily disease; ye are saved through the forbearance of God from temporal calamities. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you. Amen.

THE WISE MEN FROM THE EAST;

A SERMON PREACHED UPON A SACRAMENTAL OCCASION,

By the Rev. ALEXANDER TELFER,

Minister of Johnstone.

“Now, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.”—MATTHEW ii. 1, 2.

As Jesus was born in the city of Bethlehem, so although he was now, in all probability, above a year old, he was still to be found in the place of his birth. His being at this time above a year old, appears very probable from what is recorded in the 16th verse, where notice is taken of the part Herod acted in the purpose which he formed to have him cut off; and his being still found in the city of Bethlehem, very evidently shows that Joseph and Mary, after taking him to Jerusalem, and doing for him there according to the law, had come back with him, and again made Bethlehem their place of abode. Luke says, it is true, in the 29th verse of the 2d chapter of his Gospel, that when Joseph and Mary had done for him all that required to be done by the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. But Luke does not speak of their immediate return. He only speaks of their return into Galilee after those occurrences to which Matthew advert's in the chapter before us. Matthew and Luke are not to be viewed as contradicting

each other. Their accounts, though different, do not disagree; for, though one of them mentions what the other omits—not in this instance only, but in several instances at several times—yet, in no one instance is there any contradiction in the narrative of the one to that of the other. Matthew does not record what Luke has recorded in his 2d chapter; and Luke does not record what Matthew has recorded in his 2d chapter; but still they are facts which both have recorded. Both have told us the truth, and nothing but the truth, though not the same truths; and as we learn from Luke how it came to pass that Jesus was born in the city of Bethlehem, how his birth was announced to a company of shepherds, while in Bethlehem's plains they were watching their flocks, and how these shepherds were taught to distinguish him from all other children; as we learn from Luke what occurred in the temple, whither Jesus had been brought by Joseph and Mary, for the purpose of being presented to the Lord, when Simeon and Anna bore testimony to him as the

promised Messiah; so we learn from Matthew what afterwards occurred before the return of Joseph and Mary with the holy child Jesus to their own city, Nazareth. Having gone back to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, after leaving Jerusalem, they had there, it would seem, taken up their abode; and, perhaps, they had done so in consequence of supposing that there it behooved them to bring Jesus up. At any rate, for the present, they resided in Bethlehem; and it obviously was while Bethlehem was yet the place of their residence, that "there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

What I intend in the following discourse is, in humble dependence on the help of God, to take,

I. A review of the narrative which is here introduced; and then,

II. To make such remarks as it seems to suggest.

I accordingly proceed to take,

I. A review of the narrative which is here introduced.

"Now, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

The only account we have of these men is contained in this chapter. But though little be recorded in reference to them, enough is here said to warrant our regarding them as men of high rank, as men of great learning, and as men of real piety. Had they been spoken of, indeed, as merely belonging to the wise men or Magi of the Magian sect then flourishing in the east, and having in Persia their principal residence, they could only have been viewed, as distinguished from others, by their higher attainments in the study of philosophy, and by the juster opinions, the comparatively juster religious opinions, which they entertained. But, as here represented, they seem to have differed from the rest of the Magi, as well as from those who did not belong to the Magian sect. In the study of nature—of natural philosophy, they seem to have been persons whose minds, being under the guidance of the Spirit, had been "led through nature up to nature's God"—led to admire the glory of God, as declared by the heavens, and to give Him the glory

of the power and wisdom which were therein displayed.

It may also be observed, that had these men been spoken of as wise men or Magi, such as Simon Magus and Elymas the sorcerer are said to have been, they could only have been viewed as infamous impostors—as magicians who imposed on the ignorant and credulous by their magical arts. But what Matthew says seems sufficient to prove that their wisdom was real and rightly employed—that, besides being held in high estimation, on account of their wisdom, by the people of the country to which they belonged, they stood very high in the favour of God; and that, while they were distinguished by their rank in society as men of great wealth, and as men of great influence, they were no less distinguished by the character they sustained, as men who had in truth their conversation in heaven.

Their country, we are told, was eastward of Jerusalem; but whether that country was Arabia, or Persia, or some other country which lay to the east, is not certainly known. It is evident, however, that, wherever it was, they saw the appearance, the luminous body, here called a star; and had reason to be satisfied that the land of Judea was the land over which they observed it to rest. They, being well acquainted with the heavenly bodies, perceived it to differ from all other stars; and, more than this, they were taught to regard it as appearing on purpose to announce the birth of the promised Messiah, of whom it was foretold by the prophet Isaiah, that he should be "a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of his people Israel;" and in reference to whom it was said by Balaam, "there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel." The coming of the Messiah was not an event of which they were ignorant: for, though Gentiles themselves, they had Jews among them who acquainted them with it; and historians tell us that the expectation of Messiah's appearance prevailed in the east, as well as in Judea, at the time here spoken of. It was generally known, and generally expected by the people of the east, that a king was to be born in the land of Judea, to whom all nations were to be in subjection; and now these men, on seeing this very extraordinary star, were given to know that the King of the Jews had been born into the world.

The star, it is true, could not of itself have sufficed to assure them that Messiah was born; the star of itself could not have

been to them an infallible evidence of what they expected having come to pass ; but as an angel was sent to the shepherds of Bethlehem when Jesus was born—as an angel addressed them while they were surrounded by the glory of the Lord, saying, “ Fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people ; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord”—as the case was thus in reference to the shepherds, so the case might be similar in reference to the sages of whom we now speak. An angel of the Lord might be sent to inform them of what had occurred ; and from him they might learn, to their full satisfaction, that Messiah had been born at that very hour when the star appeared, and in that very place over which the star rested ; or, they might in a dream have had this revealed to them, even as, in a dream, they were warned of God not to go back to Herod, but in some other way to return to their home. At any rate, we find that, by means of the star, they were certified of his birth, and had no more doubt with regard to its certainty, than they had with regard to the star's appearance. Hence the question they put when they came to Jerusalem was not, What has happened ? Is it so that the King of the Jews has been born ? but, “ Where is he that is born King of the Jews ? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.”

They knew for certain that he was now born. They knew for certain that he had been born in the land of Judea, but with the particular place of his birth they were yet unacquainted ; and where, as to this, were they likelier to obtain the needed information than in Jerusalem, the capital of the country. In Jerusalem, therefore, we find them inquiring ; and though we cannot tell how far they had come, yet in all probability, they must have come hither from a very great distance. In all probability they must have been travelling for several months ; and, oh ! how great must have been their desire to do homage to Jesus, when they cheerfully submitted to all the expense, as well as fatigue, of such an undertaking. We find them in Jerusalem inquiring for Jesus ; yet even in Jerusalem, though more than a year had probably elapsed since Jesus was born, his birth was till now not generally known ; for though Simeon and Anna had both spoken of him, it was only to those who were looking for spiritual redemption in Israel, the number of whom was

comparatively small ; and neither the king, nor any of his counsellors, no, nor even the chief priests and scribes of the people, appear to have so much as heard of his birth, till these wise men, who had come from the east, acquainted them with it, by adopting the language expressed in our text, “ Where is he that is born King of the Jews ? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.”

The effect which was produced by this their inquiry, is the next thing to which I would call your attention ; and you see it thus spoken of in the following context, verse 3, “ When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea : for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah : for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privately called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child ; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.” Both Herod and the people were expecting the Messiah to make his appearance. But most of the people, in common with Herod, were expecting him to appear as a temporal prince ; and to this it was owing that both he and they were troubled on hearing the tidings of his birth. We may, no doubt, be ready to reckon it strange that the tidings of his birth should have troubled the people. It is easy to account for Herod's being troubled ; for, in Jesus he might think a rival had appeared, who would sooner or later take possession of his kingdom. But on the supposition that Jesus had appeared as a temporal prince, what occasion had the people to be greatly disquieted ? Had they not rather cause to rejoice and be glad that he was now born, who, they hoped, would deliver them from the Roman yoke ; who, according to their fond though unfounded expectations, was to make their Zion the seat of empire, and to make their city the capital of the world ? Why, they might in this hope have had cause to rejoice, had another than Herod been king of Judea. But Herod being king, they had in it for the present no

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

occasion of joy. They knew very well that Herod was a monarch who would go any length he had power to go in opposing a rival. They knew very well that Herod was a monarch of cruel dispositions, and anticipating nothing but commotion and bloodshed; in consequence thereof, they were troubled to hear that Messiah had been born. Neither they, however, nor Herod their king, had any good reason for their present disquietude. Had they known the Messiah to be what he was, not a temporal prince, but a spiritual Saviour; had they known that he appeared to suffer and to die in order to save, they would plainly have had cause, instead of being troubled, to rejoice at his birth.

Herod knew that the coming of Messiah was expected; but he knew not the Scriptures, and knew not the place where, according to the Scriptures, the Messiah should be born. He therefore convened the chief priests and scribes, who studied and explained the Scriptures to the people, that of them he might learn where the promised Messiah was to make his appearance; and they rightly informed him, when they gave him to know, that the birth-place of Messiah was the city of Bethlehem. Then he secretly called the wise men unto him, and after ascertaining when Jesus was born, by carefully inquiring when the star had appeared, he sent them to Bethlehem, enjoining them to continue their search for the child until they had discovered him; and enjoining them also, as soon as they had made the wished-for discovery, to bring him back word, that he too might go and pay him due homage.

The wise men might think that Herod, like themselves, had really the intention of honouring Jesus as the King of the Jews; but Herod in reality had no such intention. He intended, when he knew where Jesus might be found, to have him destroyed; and thus there appears to have been in his mind a very strange mixture of regard to the Scriptures with enmity to God. He regarded as true what was said in the Scriptures concerning the place where Jesus should be born; and yet he was determined that that very Ruler, whom God had appointed, should not be allowed to live on the earth. Poor impious man! like another Pharaoh he would fight against God, though he ought to have known, that "woe must be to him who strives with his Maker." His purpose, however, we find, was defeated; and we find, at the same time, that the wise men attained the end they had in view.

Let us, then, in concluding our review of this narrative, advert for a little to the wise men's success, of which, you will observe, the Evangelist has given us the following account in the 9th verse and downwards:—"When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." As the people of Israel, when conducted from Egypt to the land of Canaan, were guided by a pillar in their way through the wilderness—by a pillar of cloud which served to direct them during the day, and by a pillar of fire which served to direct them during the night; as thus they were guided till they came to the borders of the promised land, so these men, you see, were, on leaving Jerusalem, conducted by a star to the birth-place of Jesus. Not only did it serve to point out the way to the city of Bethlehem, but it served, after doing so, to point out besides the very habitation in which Jesus was; and thus the necessity of searching with diligence, as Herod had enjoined, was plainly superseded. By means of the star they discovered with ease, and discovered at once, as well as with certainty, the object of their search, so that they never needed to ask any one where the child might be found; and as the star which now guided them was known to be the same they had seen in the east—they had seen resting over the land of Judea when they were in the east, and by which they had been led to come to Jerusalem with the anxious inquiry, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" as the star which now guided them was known to be the same they had seen in the east, so they no sooner saw it than they greatly rejoiced. And why did it gladden them? Why did it make them so exceedingly joyful? Why? because it evinced to their full satisfaction, that the journey they had taken was approved of by God; and that God, even God, was making it prosperous.

Nor can it be doubted, the case being thus, that they had good reason to look upon themselves as the objects of favour. But why, it may be asked, if these men were really the favourites of heaven, why had not the star been ere now employed to guide

them to Jesus? Why had it not appeared, or rather reappeared, as soon as they entered the land of Judea, to conduct them to Bethlehem? Why had its disappearance, its continued disappearance, made it necessary for them to inquire in Jerusalem where Jesus might be found? Why, God, if he had pleased, could no doubt have caused the star to reappear much sooner than he did. He could, no doubt, have caused it to lead them directly to the birth-place of Jesus, without making requisite their going to Jerusalem; but, in his all-wise providence, he ordered the case to be as it was—that, through their inquiry, the birth of the Messiah, besides being made more extensively known than as yet it had been, might come to excite more general attention than as yet it had done in the capital of Judea—that Herod's dispositions, in reference to him, might be brought to the test, and that an opportunity might be afforded of showing how vain were the efforts of Herod to have him destroyed.

We know not for certain what knowledge of Jesus these wise men possessed; but it seems very likely, that he who had been pleased, in a way so miraculous, to acquaint them with his birth and also to conduct them to the place of his abode—that he who had induced them to come so far to see and to worship him, had made them acquainted with his true character, giving them to know that he was a king of a peculiar description, unequalled in dignity, and unequalled in excellence by the kings of the earth; giving them to know that the nature of man was united in his person with the nature of God—that in him there appeared not a temporal prince, but a spiritual Saviour, and one who had come to deliver the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, from their spiritual enemies. It was easy for God, through the teaching of his Spirit, to enlighten them thus in the knowledge of Jesus; and by means of the Jews who resided among them in the place whence they came, who knew the Scriptures, and knew how Messiah was therein described, it is far, very far, from being unlikely that he did thus enlighten them. Perhaps, too, by Mary, the mother of Jesus, who, it may be supposed, would give them an account of his miraculous conception, and of what had been testified in reference to him, the views they had of him might be still more enlarged; and hence, when as worshippers they fell down before him to pay him their homage, that homage would be such, in all probability, as consisted with his being their incarnate Saviour—God manifest

in the flesh. Nay, it seems the more likely that theirs were becoming conceptions of his character, when, mean though he was in his outward condition, they honoured him as divine; for had he been merely an earthly potentate in their estimation, the meanness and poverty in which they had found him could not but have caused them to feel disappointed. Yet no such thing as the least disappointment did they feel or express. They fell down before him as justly entitled to religious worship; and as it cannot be doubted that they were, in doing so, accepted of God, so, how can we doubt that as really divine they had been taught to regard him?

After paying him their homage, they forthwith proceeded to offer him their gifts: they opened their treasures, and presented him with gold, frankincense, and myrrh—these being the best and most valuable presents their country afforded. Supposing them, then, to have respected him thus—to have respected him as God in the homage they paid him—to have respected him as man in the gifts they offered him, how else could they have acted a part more becoming in showing him respect; and may we not admire the kindness of Providence in the gifts they bestowed. How would Joseph and Mary regard them as proofs of divine liberality, more especially when called to flee into Egypt, as they very soon were, they found them supplying the means of subsistence, which they might not have otherwise been able to procure? But who can tell how highly these men would feel themselves gratified—now that all their efforts had been crowned with success—now that they had found in the infant Messiah the object of their search!—and may we not hope that many would, on their return to the east, be savingly profited through their instrumentality.

I now proceed, as proposed,

II. To make such remarks, as the interesting narrative thus briefly reviewed appears to suggest.

The remarks I have to make, being no less fitted to assist us in judging aright of ourselves, than fitted to assist us in our meditations on Him whose death we are about to commemorate, being fitted to promote the improvement of others, as well as of those who intend to communicate, I would have all present to look upon themselves as interested in them, and to unite in desiring that the Spirit of God may render them conducive to their edification.

I remark, first, That despisers of Jesus

are, doubtless, to be viewed as despisers of him whom his heavenly Father delighteth to honour. When we go to Bethlehem, and observe the condition of the infant Messiah, at the time of his birth, how plainly do we see, that in meanness and poverty he made his appearance! He was born in a stable; he was laid in a manger; and, knowing him to be God manifested in the flesh, may we, not well regard as wonderful indeed, the humbling of himself we have thus to contemplate. But, although no displays of earthly magnificence accompanied his birth, it was rendered illustrious, yea, much more illustrious than ever was the birth of any mere man, however distinguished; for who among men, though born in the most splendid of earthly palaces, though born to be the greatest of earthly monarchs, ever had his birth announced by an angel; or, in its celebration, a multitude of angels divinely employed? Yet, giving us to know what was seen and heard at the birth of Jesus, Luke tells us in his Gospel, that while certain shepherds were watching their flocks in the plains of Bethlehem, the angel of the Lord came suddenly upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone suddenly around them, so that they were afraid. Then, after the angel had banished their fears by acquainting them with the birth of the promised Messiah, he was joined by a multitude of the heavenly host, who praised God, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men." For whom among men, when born into the world, had ever the heavens assumed a new star? yet a new star appeared at the birth of Jesus, being formed for the purpose of proclaiming his birth, and placed so evidently over Judea, as to satisfy observers, however far distant, that Judea was the land in which he was born.

Nor are we to regard the honouring of Jesus by his heavenly Father as confined to his birth. It continued through his life, it continued at his death, it continues till now, and shall be continued for ever and ever. Observe him in the wilderness when, after being forty days tempted of the devil, the angels of heaven became his attendants and ministered unto him. Observe him at Jordan when he came unto John to be baptized of him, and when, after his baptism, the heavens were opened, the Spirit like a dove descended upon him, and a voice was heard saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Observe him on the mount of transfiguration when his face, we

are told, did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light; when Moses and Elias appearing in glory were seen talking with him, and when the voice from heaven a second time declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Observe him in the garden when he was in an agony, sweating—as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground—when an angel appeared from heaven to strengthen him. Observe him on Calvary when, treated though he was as the vilest of criminals, God ordered it so that the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple completely divided; that the earth did quake; that the rocks were rent; that the graves were opened; and that the Roman Centurion was induced to exclaim, "Certainly this was a righteous man; truly this was the Son of God." Observe him when rising again from the dead: the stone was removed from the door of the sepulchre by an angel of light; and so overpowering was the angel's appearance, that for fear of him the keepers did shake and became as dead men. Observe him at Bethany when, lifting up his hands, he blessed his disciples; and when, as he blessed them, he was taken from them and carried up into heaven—a cloud receiving him out of their sight. And think of him now—now that he is seated on the Father's right hand—now that "the Father hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Think of him, too, as coming at last in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory; as raising the dead, and changing the living; and as gathering together all nations before him, to judge them in righteousness. Surely the Father delighteth to honour him! and shall he whom the Father delighteth to honour be by us set at nought? Is a personage like this to be lightly esteemed? Is a Saviour like this to be treated with scorn—as though he were unworthy of a welcome reception, or as though, by receiving him, we would be disgraced? Treat him as we may, he is worthy of honour, of the highest honour; and honoured he shall be, when they who despise him—continuing his despisers—shall be covered with shame and everlasting contempt.

2d. Another remark suggested by the narrative we have just been reviewing is, that Jesus is to Gentiles as well as to Jews a

Prince and a Saviour. Though the Jews were a people whom God had for ages peculiarly favoured; yet, according to the Scriptures, the wall of partition between them and the Gentiles was by the Messiah to be broken down; and the following, among others, are passages in which we have this foretold: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." "The princes of the nations shall be joined to the people of the God of Abraham." "There shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious." "It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth." "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."

Behold, then, my brethren, these men from the East, these Gentile philosophers coming to Bethlehem, and worshipping Jesus, the king of the Jews! behold, and be satisfied, that the promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world, was no sooner born than the promises of God regarding the Gentiles began to be fulfilled! and, when we think of the many who have since been added to the christian Church from among our own selves, as well as from among our Gentile progenitors and Gentile contemporaries, how ought we to unite in stirring up our souls to bless and to magnify the name of the Lord! What encouragement have we more to make application; and what should be more the concern of us all, than at last to be found in that countless multitude, out of every nation, and kindred, and people, who shall "stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, having palms in their hands; and crying with a loud voice, Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb?" If others have been saved, why may not we? and if we have already been brought to the Saviour, why may not others be led to embrace him? Nay, how can we doubt that the period will arrive, when "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the channel of the sea;" when "the way of the Lord shall be known on the earth, and his saving health among all nations;" when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ;" when Messiah's domin-

ion shall be found "to extend from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth;" when "the kings of Tarshish and of the Isles shall bring presents, the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts; yea, when all kings shall fall down before him, and all nations shall serve him?" Is not this a period we are taught to expect? and how can we regard its arrival as impossible when he who has foretold it is the Lord God Almighty? or how can we regard its arrival as doubtful when he who has foretold it is faithful and true? May we not well regard these men from the east as the first fruits to God of that plentiful harvest which he has been gathering, and is gathering in, and shall go on gathering into the Church, till the words of our Lord shall come to be verified in all their extent: "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also must I bring in, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd?"

3d. Another remark suggested by the narrative we have just been reviewing is, that the christian faith is not to be viewed as exclusively embraced by the poor and illiterate. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound those which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are, that no flesh should glory in his presence." Yes! the poor and illiterate are much more commonly to be found among those by whom Jesus is embraced, than the learned and the wealthy; and herein God's wisdom is plainly displayed; for if the cause of Christ were only espoused, and only maintained by men of high rank and great human learning, its success in the world might be viewed as ascribable to man, and not God.

On the other hand, however, God's wisdom is no less plainly displayed in furnishing instances, and these not a few, of the learned and the wealthy being led to the Saviour; for if Christ were embraced by none but the poor, or by none but the illiterate, his reception in the world might be viewed as the consequence of nothing but weakness, or meanness, or ignorance in those who embrace him. But as the case stands, God's grace is made manifest in every conversion, and we are not allowed to regard it as mean to be followers of

Christ, any more than to reckon it impossible for God to make converts of every description of sinners to the christian faith. We have the learned Paul, who was brought up, you know, at the feet of Gamaliel, among his Apostles as well as the illiterate fishermen of Galilee. We have the ruler Nicodemus, and the honourable councillor, Joseph of Arimathea, and the wealthy Zaccheus among his disciples, as well as the two poor wayside beggars, whose eyes had been opened, and others who like them belonged to the inferior classes of men. We have among his worshippers these eastern philosophers, both wealthy and wise, as well as the humble uneducated shepherds, who tended their flocks in the plains of Bethlehem; and in every age not a few of the greatest and wisest of men have reckoned it an honour, such as earthly distinctions could never have conferred, to be numbered among Christians. Indeed, however learned or wealthy men are, if they were really wise, and would have true riches, they would say, as did Paul, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him; not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

How can there be any, whatever be their rank, or whatever their possessions, whom connexion with Jesus the Son of God's love, and the author of salvation, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, would not serve to ennable and serve to enrich?

4th. Another remark suggested by the narrative we have just been reviewing is, that as to the enjoyment of external advantages, we are more highly favoured than these men were. These men, it is obvious, had great favour shown them. While intimation was given them of the birth of the Messiah, they were given to know, by means of a star, where he was to be found; and the star reappearing on their leaving Jerusalem, guided them to Bethlehem the place of his birth. But highly as they were thus favoured of God, how much more highly has God favoured us! How far, far superior to the light of the star which appeared for their guidance, is the light of the Gospel with which we are furnished! How clearly and fully is Jesus revealed to us by the Gospel! and if any be ignorant of what he

either is, considered in himself, or of what he has done and suffered in our stead; if any be ignorant of his personal dignity, or official importance; if any be ignorant of where he may be found, or of how they may come to be interested in him, their ignorance cannot surely be justly ascribed, when they are living under the light of the Gospel, to the means of information not being allowed them.

The question then is, are we careful to improve our distinguished advantages? Are we guided by the light with which we are surrounded? Do we know what is taught us concerning the Saviour? Do we go, as directed, to him for salvation? If the case be not thus, how can we be blameless? How can we be but chargeable with criminal negligence? And should our negligence be continued, how can it be doubted that these eastern sages shall rise up at last in the judgment against us? They only, however, will cease to be negligent whose minds are enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, by the teaching of the Spirit; and hence, I shall conclude the present discourse with one remark more, as likewise suggested by the narrative before us; namely, That great is the difference between those who are savingly acquainted with Jesus, and those who are not. What a difference is observable between these men and the inhabitants of Jerusalem! and to what are we to view such difference as owing? Is it not to this? that the former knew Jesus to be what he was through the teaching of the Spirit, while the latter did not.

The inhabitants of Jerusalem, though nearer the Saviour than these men were, knew not that he was born. They had made, and were making, no inquiries respecting him. Like many among us who, although they have at hand the means of information, neglect to improve them, and continue as regardless of the knowledge of Jesus as if no Jesus had ever been promised, or ever appeared; they were feeling no concern, they were taking no pains, to know either whether or where he was born. Nay, even when taught by the wise men's inquiry to view him as having appeared in their land, they were far, very far from duly regarding him. And at this very day, how many may be met with who, although made acquainted with the Saviour's appearance, neither seek him, nor serve him, nor show him respect! Herod, it is true, professed to be in readiness to pay him due homage; but, though seemingly his friend, he was really his enemy: and soon did he show that, had he

been able, he would have destroyed him. Nor is it uncommon for men, at this day, to make a profession of attachment to Jesus, while they are in reality among his despisers. Oh! see that the case be not thus with you. Oh! see that, instead of being like Herod, or like the Jews in general, who dwelt in Jerusalem; ye resemble these men who came from the East: and as, till ye resemble them ye can have no warrant to look upon yourselves as taught by the Spirit; so, how you will act if you really resemble them may easily be learned from what is here stated. You will feel yourselves excited to serious inquiry. You will feel yourselves disposed to make any sacrifice, to employ any efforts, in order to obtain an interest in Jesus, in order to promote the welfare of your souls, that may be required. Some time, it is true, may be suffered to elapse ere Jesus, whom the Spirit has led you to seek, be actually found: but your labour in seeking will still be continued, and it will not be found to be labour in vain. In some of your hopes you may be disappointed, not finding the Saviour when you hoped to find him, and where you may have had some reason to expect he would be found of you; but sooner or later you shall find him to your joy; and however many others may be careless around you, the care you still feel, the pains you still take, shall be amply rewarded in at length finding him whom your souls love.

Even those who have rejoiced in the light of God's countenance, may now be in darkness, walking in darkness without seeing light. They may not be perceiving their interest in the Saviour, as they wish to perceive it; and occasion may be given them to say, as did Job, "Oh! that I knew where I might find him;" or to say, as did the Psalmist, "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" Or to say, as did the Church in the song of Solomon, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth:" but light shall arise in the midst of darkness. The star of direction shall at length reappear; and, sending out his light in answer to their prayers, God shall lead them, and guide them, bringing them to the place where he makes himself manifest. Then shall they go to the altar of God, and to God himself their exceeding joy; beauty having thus been given them for ashes, the oil of joy for inounding, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Perhaps some of you

who have been groping in darkness, earnest in your prayers, and anxious in your inquiries, may, in consequence of light being made to arise, be gladdened at his table with a sight of the Saviour; and have reason to say, "It is good to be here." Oh! that God may appear to the joy of his people; and oh! that his people, being made joyful by him, may be heartily inclined, and duly prepared, to give unto the Saviour glory and honour—the glory and honour due unto his name. Oh! that there may be such worshipping of Jesus, and such consecration of persons, and substance, and services to him, as becomes the occasion on which we are called to have fellowship with him.

These men from the East having opened their treasures, presented him with gold, frankincense, and myrrh; and appearing in his presence on the mount of communion, what is the offering we ought to present? Why, acting as we ought, we will devote ourselves to him with all that we are, with all that we have, to be his only, to be his wholly, to be his for ever. To all, of a truth, he is justly entitled; for do we not owe to him our existence? do we not owe to him our preservation? do we not owe to him our redemption? and, having appeared in our nature to save us; having given nothing less than his life for our ransom; having done, as our surety, what none but himself could ever have accomplished; having suffered, as our surety, inconceivable things; and having, as our surety, procured for us benefits of unspeakable importance, how unworthily would we act, if we gave not ourselves unreservedly to him! "Come, then, and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." And after having opened our mouths to the Lord, let us be on our guard against going back. Let us see, that in continued dependence on grace, we continue to maintain the christian character; to act in consistency with our christian profession, being "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord." Let us see that we thus make manifest to others, as well as to ourselves, our being in the way to the kingdom above; and then, of a truth, the language of John may also be ours, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Amen.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 24TH MAY, 1834.

No. 113. | SERMON by the Rev. WILLIAM CUNNINGHAM, Edinburgh. Price 2d.
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CHRIST'S HUMILIATION, A MOTIVE TO CHARITY;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH, ON SABBATH EVENING,
16TH MARCH, 1834, IN BEHALF OF THE GLASGOW COLONIAL SOCIETY,

By the Rev. WILLIAM CUNNINGHAM,

Minister of the College Church, Edinburgh.*

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”—2 Cor. viii. 9.

FROM various statements contained in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of Paul, we find that it was a custom in these times for men who had been converted to the faith of the Gospel, to make contributions of their wordly substance not only for the poor among themselves in their own church and town, but also for their poor brethren in other churches and in different parts of the world. The saints in Judea and Jerusalem seem to have been particularly poor, and dependent on the bounty of others, and we find that most of the churches planted by St. Paul contributed something to their necessities. The Apostle, in the former Epistle, at the 1st verse of the 16th chapter, had given directions to the Corinthian converts for making a collection for this object. It would appear, from the chapter from which our text is taken, that the collection had not yet been completed—that the work of contribution had not gone on among them so readily or so rapidly as might have been expected from the professions they made, from the attainments they had reached, and from the comparative abundance of wealth which they enjoyed. In the commencement of this chapter, the Apostle stimulates them to increased liberality, and, especially, to the completion of the collection they had begun, by the great example of the churches in Macedonia, that is, the churches at Philippi and Thessalonica—reminds them of the attainments they had made in other graces, as a motive for their also abounding in this; and, finally, in the text, sets before them those views of divine truth which supply the great motives to works of christian charity and all other christian graces. Let us then attend to the import of the Apostle's statements,

and see how they bear on the great duty which it was his object to enforce. The Corinthians are called on to abound in liberality, in consequence of their knowing the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ; and this grace of his was manifested in this, “that though rich, yet for their sakes he became poor, that they through his poverty might be rich.”

Let us consider, in the first place, what we are here told of Christ, that he was rich, and that for our sakes he became poor. This of course implies that, at some time or other, a palpable change took place in Christ's condition and circumstances, and that the change, in place of being one which raised him to greater honour, and dignity, and happiness than before, had an effect directly the reverse. What is there, then, in the history of our Saviour, that answers this description? He was born, as you all know, in a very humble and obscure condition, of parents in the lowest walks of life, in circumstances of peculiar humiliation, having been brought forth in a stable, and laid in a manger. He spent his youth in a retired and insignificant village, engaged, in all likelihood, in the humble occupation of a carpenter, and most probably labouring for his daily subsistence. During the last three years of his life, he was, indeed, mainly dependent on the bounty of others; but this did not imply any great change in his outward circumstances. At last he was put to a cruel and ignominious death, as a malefactor, and the whole of his subsequent history presents to us a career of glory and honour. Where, then, in any period of his history, from his birth in Bethlehem till his ascension to the right hand of his Father, are

there any circumstances to which the statement in the text may, with propriety, be applied, that he was rich, and became poor? During his whole appearance on earth, he was poor, destitute, and despised. There was no portion of his history in which, with a reference to any subsequent portion of it, he could be said to be rich; and yet the Apostle, in the text, distinctly intimates that he was rich before he became poor—that at one time he existed in a condition in which he might be said to be rich, and that afterwards he was in a condition of poverty. From the time when he was born, he might, in the fullest sense of the word, be said to be poor; and, therefore, the fair inference would seem to be, that he was in some more honourable and exalted condition before he was born. This might appear a bold inference, had we no other information upon the subject than that contained in the text. We have, however, ample information in Scripture not only to establish the conclusion that Christ, before he was born, was in a condition in which, from his birth till his resurrection, he might be said to be rich, but likewise to enable us to understand what that condition was. Before he was born, he was God over all, blessed for evermore, existing in the possession of all the glories and perfections of the divine nature. From eternity, he was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, rich in all the perfections of divinity, rich in all the sources of happiness, which infinite moral excellence could furnish, which unlimited power and dominion could bestow. Well might he be said to be rich, who had all the fulness of the God-head, who was Creator and proprietor of all things, "whose is the earth and the fulness thereof." He never could become richer, never could become possessed of more exalted perfection, of more extensive and absolute dominion, of more complete and satisfying happiness; and if any change could take place in his condition and circumstances, it could only be one whereby his infinite power would not be so fully exerted for manifesting his own glory, and for ensuring his own happiness. Such a change, the Apostle intimates, did take place; and he who was once rich, became in the fulness of time poor. The glory which he had from eternity possessed was veiled and obscured, so as to be no longer visible to those with whom in poverty and humiliation he associated. He appeared simply as a man in the lowest class of those intelligent creatures whom he had himself created, while formerly he was worshipped as God, and

was raised above the highest archangels. His infinite power and wisdom he did not put forth so fully and palpably to promote his own happiness, and advance his own purposes—he became helpless and dependent; the weakest could insult, and the meanest could injure him. Once he was far beyond the reach of suffering; now he was liable to suffering and death, and he did suffer and die. Once the highest of created beings never approached him without the profoundest reverence; afterwards the most abject of slaves might, and did, spit upon him and buffet him. His riches had vanished away, and to the eye of man he appeared in that state of meanness, and suffering, and contempt, with which the idea of poverty is associated. He had descended from a height of riches, which no created being could comprehend, to a depth of suffering and humiliation, such as seldom or never has been equalled in the history of sinful man. From the circumstance that we have been so long familiar with this great truth, and from the fact that the two different parts of it, his original glory and subsequent humiliation, have been commonly presented to our minds together, as well as from the exalted nature of the subject itself, we form, in general, a very inadequate conception of the change upon our Saviour's condition, adverted to by the Apostle in the text. But what, think you, would be the feeling of the angels when they, existing contemporaneously, witnessed this change from riches to poverty? Ever since they had been brought into existence by Christ's power, they had been witnesses of the displays of his divine and glorious perfections. They had been worshipping and serving him with their whole souls; with deepest reverence they had been privileged to prostrate themselves daily before him; but a day at length arrived when they beheld him whom they had been accustomed to worship as their Creator, born of a woman, and bearing the nature of a man, sink far beneath themselves—even to the lowest order of their intelligent fellow-creatures; and not only so, but occupying a most humble and obscure position in the lowest and most degraded province of his Father's dominions. What wonder and astonishment would fill their breasts at this spectacle! and how would those feelings swell and increase as they followed him in his marvellous history, and saw that his humiliation deepened, till at last he fell a victim to the malice of his enemies? They would then fully appreciate the import of the Apostle's statement, or at least would make something like an approach to it

that he had been rich, and became poor—and by the help of what is revealed to us of his original glory and happiness, and subsequent humiliation and suffering, we may, and should in some measure, enter into their views and feelings, and feel the power of the Apostle's statement in the text.

In the second place we remark, that when Christ, who had formerly been rich, that is, glorious, exalted, and happy—became poor, that is, humble, helpless, and destitute—he displayed *grace*, that is, favour or kindness, inasmuch as he did this for our sakes, and in order “that we through his poverty might be rich,” there must have been an adequate cause for so wonderful a change and so astonishing an event. Christ did it voluntarily; he was not reduced from riches to poverty by the will of another, or by events over which he had no control, as is commonly the case in those changes of outward condition which take place among men. It was his own voluntary act; and, therefore, if we wish to learn the cause of it, we have just to look into his heart, and ascertain the motives by which he was animated. First we know it was done for our sakes. The change took place upon our account. Then he laid aside his riches, and became poor; it was from a desire, and with an intention, to benefit us. He was animated by kindness to us; and when he did become poor, he was conferring upon us a precious and dear-bought favour. When, then, we are told of Christ's original riches and subsequent poverty, we must view the change from the one to the other not merely as a most wonderful and glorious object of contemplation which should attract our attention and engross our faculties, but as an event in which we have all the deepest personal interest, which bears most materially on our condition and destinies, and should, therefore, in right reason, influence our motives and actions. When we know that he who was once so rich, became so poor for our sakes, this sets before us his grace and kindness; and when we think of the magnitude of the change, the depth of the humiliation, we may well believe that his grace or kindness was exceedingly great, and we might confidently expect that its manifestation would produce consequences or results exceedingly glorious. And, accordingly, the Apostle goes on to inform us not only that he, though once rich, voluntarily became poor for our sakes, but more fully and precisely that he did so, in order that we through his poverty might be rich. The great leading idea involved in this statement is this, that he voluntarily made a great

might effect a great change on ours. He came down to our condition, that he might raise us to his. He humbled himself, that he might exalt us. He humbled himself very low, that he might exalt us very high. He could not, indeed, sink altogether down to our level in every particular; for he could not become, as every one of us is, a sinner directly and properly chargeable with personal guilt; and, on the other hand, however poor he might become, he could not raise us to a participation of those infinite perfections which he himself had ever enjoyed. Infinite perfection and personal guilt are incompatible extremes, which, at no interval of duration, can attach to one and the same Being. He who had once been possessed of infinite perfection, never could become a transgressor; and he who had once transgressed God's law, never could possess infinite perfection; but still it is substantially true that Christ Jesus descended to the level of our poverty, that he might raise us to the level of his own riches. We were indeed poor, occupying the lowest place among God's intelligent creatures, infinitely degraded by sin and its baleful consequences. We were frail, helpless, miserable, exposed to many trials and afflictions, and every day that passed over us drawing nearer to death, which must not only terminate our connexion with this world, but consign us to inevitable and endless woe. To all this poverty of ours, except the guilt of actual sin, Christ subjected himself. He endured in no ordinary degree all the miseries of this life. He was treated and dealt with as if he had been a sinner, and at last endured the death of a malefactor. Such was the poverty to which he descended, but it was in order that we, through his poverty, might be rich. We were guilty, and exposed to God's wrath and curse, and in danger of hell fire, and in this sense we were poor indeed; but Christ, who was the holy and just One, stained with no crime, and liable to no charge, voluntarily endured the punishment in our room, the infliction of which upon ourselves must have sunk us in eternal ruin. He who was the great Author of the Law, was made under the law. He paid the awful penalty due to transgression, although he kept all the law's requirements.

The consequence is, that we who are in him are made rich in the pardon of our aggravated and unmerited sins—in deliverance from eternal misery. Christ had been from eternity rich in the favour and complacency of God; men in this respect, too, were poor outcasts from the divine favour and objects of the divine dis-

spect, voluntarily placed himself in a situation in which he knew well that God must hide his face from him, and forsake him, and deal with him as an enemy ; and the object of this was that we might become rich in the enjoyment of God's favour, and abound in tokens of his kind and friendly regard. Christ could not lay aside his perfect moral excellence—could not actually cease to be immaculately holy—could not really become in his own person a transgressor of God's law, but he did submit to be stigmatized and treated as a sinner, that we might become rich in true holiness, and in conformity to his own blessed image. Christ had been rich in all the glories and felicities of heaven. He left them all and laid them aside, descended to all the poverty, and humiliation, and meanness of earth ; and did so, that he might rescue us from that mean and degraded condition in which he found us, and from that far more degraded and terrible state to which we were speedily and inevitably hastening, and raise us to all the glories and felicities of that heaven from which he came forth, that he might place us in a condition of more exalted glory and blessedness than the angels, and even render us partakers of that very glory to which he himself, in consequence of his humiliation and obedience unto death, has been raised.

To attempt to elucidate more particularly the manner in which Christ becoming poor, contributes to making us rich, would take up too much of your time. It would, indeed, require an exposition of the whole scheme of divine truth ; but enough, perhaps, has been said to enable you to enter somewhat into the Apostle's statement, that Christ who was rich for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich. See, then, that you have now present to your minds right conceptions of Christ's original condition—of his rich glory and rich happiness—of the deep poverty to which he voluntarily submitted, and from no desire to serve any purpose of his own, but for our sakes—of the misery and degradation in which he found us, and the riches to which he raised us—of the rich and abundant favour, and glory, and happiness, which it was his object to procure, and which he actually bestows upon all who come to him.

All who are acquainted with the meaning of these truths, and believe in their reality, may in one sense or other be said *to know* the grace or kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of course may be expected to feel the practical influence of the truth, and to be animated thereby to a right discharge of duty. When these truths are known,

a man must see and acknowledge that Jesus has manifested great grace or kindness towards the human race—that he has given the most unquestionable and affecting proof of his sincere love and ardent affection, by leaving glory, dignity, and happiness, such as eye hath not seen and ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, by submitting to humiliation and suffering, in order to benefit, and benefit unspeakably, the objects of his affection. And those who believe in this as a great reality, and regard it as directly bearing on the condition of the human race, cannot but feel these truths constraining them to love their fellow-men, and to make sacrifices of their comfort and convenience to promote their temporal and spiritual welfare. In contemplating the great truth of the text, we have set before us a splendid example of generous and devoted love, which should come home to our understandings and hearts, and constrain us to imitate it. We had no claim on Christ's love ; we were unworthy of any token of his regard ; there was much about us to repel and disgust, and yet Christ loved us and manifested his grace towards us ; and it would therefore ill become any who call themselves his disciples to withhold their kindness and liberality from any of their fellow-men, because they think they have no claim upon them and no merit. Christ's love was not easily manifested. In order to confer any real benefit upon its objects, it was necessary for Christ to descend from riches to poverty, to undergo a humiliation, in comparison of which the greatest reverses of fortune that were ever exhibited in the history of our race, as, for example, when the mightiest monarchs have been reduced to imprisonment and slavery, and those whose riches excited the wonder and admiration of nations, have been forced to beg their bread, may be regarded as most insignificant trifles. And surely those who regard him as their Lord and Master, and as one who, though rich, yet for their sakes became poor, should never think of grudging any trouble or expense which it may be necessary for them to undergo, any self-denial which it may be needful for them to exercise for the relief and happiness of those whom Christ suffered so much to save.

If you are capable of admiring the singular excellence displayed in Christ becoming man, and humbling himself, and bearing our sins ; and if the contemplation of this has ever called forth any generous emotion in your hearts—if you feel that you are bound in consequence of what he has done to imbibe his Spirit and imitate his example,

then you must take a deep interest in the welfare of all around you, and especially of all beneath you—you must be guided by a sincere desire to promote their happiness, and must not be deterred from promoting their welfare by its requiring from you some sacrifices, or exposing you to some inconveniences. Had Christ acted towards us in the manner in which we conduct ourselves towards our fellow-men, and had he been as unwilling to make sacrifices for our sakes as we are for theirs, we had been still dwelling in abject poverty, exposed to God's wrath and curse in the life that now is, and in that which is to come. When, then, we dwell on the truth of what Christ has done for us, let us imbibe more of his Spirit, and imitate more fully his example, in our intercourse with our fellow-men; let us guard against that indifference to their condition which keeps us inactive; let us mortify that constant desire to please and gratify ourselves, and to court the favour and enjoy the society of our superiors, which prevents our making such sacrifices as we ought, to relieve the wants and promote the comforts of many, whom God in his providence has not so highly favoured with the blessings of this life or the means of grace. The very first lesson taught us by Christ's incarnation or humiliation, is just the obligation of loving our fellow-men, however unworthy, and testifying our love to them, by really doing something for their benefit, although it should cost us considerable sacrifice, require considerable exertion, and impose on us considerable self-denial. And yet how few, who call themselves christian followers, seem to have learned this great primary lesson! Many, indeed, take an interest in the welfare of others, and do something, and give something, for promoting their happiness; and yet how seldom do we find men devoting to the promotion of the welfare of others such a portion of their time, their strength, and their substance, as to impose on themselves any considerable inconvenience, or to require of themselves much self-denial. We do not expect Christ's followers literally to descend from riches to poverty, and at once to abandon their wealth for the good of their poorer brethren; because we believe that, in general, and in all ordinary circumstances, and with respect to the probable duration of their lives, most men will be able to do more for the benefit of their poorer brethren, by remaining substantially in the stations in which Providence has placed them, and making a fair and liberal use of what God's bounty has bestowed upon them. But we still maintain that there is no trace of any thing

like resemblance to Christ, unless there be a devotion to his service, and a devotion to the interests of our fellow-men, and such a proportion of our time, and wealth, and substance, as does require of us some sacrifice, and impose on us some self-denial; and no man knows the grace of the Lord Jesus at all, unless from a regard to Christ, and under the influence of his Spirit, he is devoting, to the relief of the miseries and the promotion of the happiness of those who have no peculiar claims upon him, *strength* that might have been exerted in serving the purposes of himself and his more immediate connexions, *time* that might have been spent in a way more agreeable to his natural inclinations, and *money* that might have procured for himself and his family a larger share of the luxuries and conveniences of life, and that might have been spent in a way more accordant with the principles and practices of the great body of those around him. We may all be ashamed of what we have done, or rather have neglected to do in this matter in time past, and should resolve in time to come to take a deeper interest in the welfare of all our fellow-men with whom we come into contact; and to devote a larger portion of our substance, if we cannot afford more of our time and strength, to the alleviation of their miseries, and especially to the supply of their spiritual wants, to the promotion of their happiness, and especially the salvation of their souls. We see that the Corinthians abounded in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, in diligence and in love to the Apostle, and yet were deficient in this grace of christian liberality; and this should lead us to regard it as by no means improbable, that however high our attainments as Christians in other respects, still, like the Corinthians, we may be deficient in this grace, and may be imperatively called to attend more carefully and closely to those views of divine truth by which it may be fostered and cherished in the soul. We can scarcely doubt that when the Corinthians were reminded by the text of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ towards them, and that though rich he for their sakes became poor, their liberality would be more abundantly called forth—that some restraints would forthwith be put on their ordinary indulgences and usual expenditure—that more of their superfluous wealth would be laid aside, and that in a short time a handsome collection would be raised and transmitted to the poor saints at Jerusalem. If any of you have felt in any measure the force of the truths we have been attempting to illustrate, your hearts will now be glowing with love to all your brethren of mankind; you will be conscious of a sincere desire to

do good to them as you have opportunity, and you will have no such scruples and grudging as you have often had about devoting a portion of your time and substance to the promotion of their happiness, and will be disposed to give liberally and cheerfully; you will seek for opportunities of benefiting your fellow-men, and will rejoice when opportunities are set before you of being instrumental by a small portion of your substance in the promotion of the eternal welfare of some, for whose sakes as well as for yours, Christ though he was rich became poor.

Your christian liberality, my friends, is this evening solicited for a class of objects who have special claims on your kindness from their relation to you, because they are your countrymen, and upon your compassion because they are peculiarly destitute. You all know that thousands of our countrymen are every year emigrating to our North American colonies, and many who, perhaps, recently were our neighbours and fellow-worshippers, or at any rate our fellow-countrymen, are now on the other side of the Atlantic, where they must spend their years far from the shores of the land that gave them birth. Their past history cannot be contemplated without awaking feelings of the deepest interest. Most of them were objects of compassion when they left their native land, as they must have been taking a step painful to their feelings as suffering under privations here, and reduced to the necessity of adopting some extraordinary measure for the support of themselves and their families. When we follow our expatriated countrymen across the Atlantic, and contemplate their present condition, now that they are settled in our colonies, it is still such as to call forth compassion. They are settled in a thinly-peopled country, where their bread must be earned literally by the sweat of their brow—where they have scarcely any prospect, with all their exertions, of procuring more for themselves and their families, at least for many years, than what is needful for their support. They are sure, indeed, of the necessities of life, though only by constant and persevering labour; and they need not our assistance in that respect: but then they are destitute in spiritual affairs. The government of this country has failed to perform the duty incumbent upon every government which professes Christianity, viz., to provide, and that effectually, for the instruction of all its subjects in the true religion. The consequence is, that in very many villages occupied almost wholly by our countrymen, there is scarcely a church to be seen, and scarcely a minister

to be heard excepting a very few who have been sent out, and are still in some measure supported by the christian liberality of this land, collected and supplied by the exertions of this Society whose claims I am now to advocate. Many, I fear the majority of our countrymen who have settled there, were indifferent about religion when they left their native shores, and not likely to seek after it, if it were not obtruded upon them, or not likely to pay any regard to it, except out of respect to the habits and decencies of those among whom they dwell. Finding themselves in a place where there are few families about them, and no church, no minister, scarcely any thing to remind them of religion at all, they, as a matter of course, sink into carelessness and utter ignorance, omit the observances they may have at one time practised, and at length continue habitually to spend their days like the brutes that perish, or like the fools that say, There is no God. This must be the result with those many thousands who have left their native land without any deep and abiding impressions of divine things. And even with those who are better instructed and more deeply impressed with the importance of religion, yet are not converted from the error of their ways and brought to the knowledge of the truth, the result must be substantially the same. They must of necessity be very much engrossed with temporal and secular things, must be peculiarly harassed with the cares of this world. Their time occupied and their attention distracted in attending to themselves and their families the common result is, as might have been expected, and as would have been the case with millions more who have staid at home, had they been placed in the same circumstances, that they in time begin to omit their religious observances, to lose their religious impressions, to forget their religious knowledge, to disregard every thing but their secular business, and to live as practical Atheists. There are some also in these countries who have been brought to the knowledge of the truth. Compelled by necessity to emigrate, for such persons scarcely emigrate but from necessity, they now lament the loss of these ordinances and means of grace in which they used to delight, and from which they derived so much of happiness and improvement; and when they reflect on the Sabbath and the ordinances of their native land, they pray and they hope that, through the liberality of the christian brethren whom they have left at home in the full enjoyment of the means of grace, and with more than they need of worldly substance, they may be soon fa-

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

oured in the land of their exile with those religious privileges they once enjoyed in the land of their birth. There are thousands of our countrymen in one or other of these circumstances, destined to live and die within the sphere of this Society's co-operation. Next to those who are wholly destitute at home, they are entitled to your sympathy and benevolence; and while they have claims as countrymen on you all, they present themselves to your contemplation in various aspects, some one of which must surely come home to your hearts. Do you compassionate those who are destitute of the religious privileges and opportunities with which you are favoured, and which is the most deplorable feature in their case, manifest the most total indifference in regard to their own destitution, and are living wholly engrossed with this world, as if they knew not and cared not about another? Then there are thousands of your countrymen in the North American colonies in this condition, and likely to continue so till summoned before Christ's judgment-seat, unless you send them spiritual instructors. Would you wish to arrest that fatal progress by which many who have been brought up in religion, do yet when deprived of regular religious ministrations, sink into utter carelessness and indifference about divine things? Then there are thousands of your countrymen in the North American colonies who, every year, are passing through some stage in this fatal transition, and approaching nearer and nearer to a state of hopelessness, while nothing is likely to prevent or retard its completion, but your contributing freely and liberally to enable them to enjoy the ordinances of God's appointment. Perhaps you are more disposed to sympathize with your christian brethren who are now lamenting the want of those privileges they once enjoyed and improved, but of which they are now destitute, while you continue to possess them. And there are some who are your countrymen according to the flesh, and, moreover, of the household of faith, and members of Christ's mystical body, who, from the other side of the Atlantic, are literally beseeching you to help them, and whose daily prayer is, that God would put into your hearts to take compassion on them, and help their spiritual wants. These are claims you cannot resist; and if you do any thing here, you must do it quickly, for unless decided and effectual measures are taken they will every year sink nearer and nearer to the condition of heathenism; and thus not only shall the present generation perish for lack of knowledge, but the country may in every sense cease to be a christian country, and

continue for many succeeding generations covered with gross darkness.

The Glasgow Colonial Society is the only association in this country which has done any thing of consequence for the supply of the spiritual necessities of our countrymen in our American colonies. Its funds are chiefly devoted to assist in sending ministers from our own church to different districts, which are not able to procure and support a minister—the expectation being, that when a minister has laboured for three years, the settlers may have so far got over the difficulties of their first settlement, as to be able and willing of themselves to support one. The society has sent out recently no fewer than seventeen persons, who are all now engaged in preaching the Gospel as stated ministers, or as itinerant missionaries. This supply has not satisfied the demand, but has only brought into nearer view the destitute condition of our expatriated countrymen, and made them wish more earnestly to enjoy habitually the means of grace. Since the missionaries have been preaching in their towns and villages, their desire of enjoying permanently the ministrations of the Gospel has become more eager, their applications for assistance have become more frequent and urgent, and their entreaties more importunate. The Society, by their efforts of last year, have exhausted their resources, and it depends on you whether their career of usefulness shall be stopped when the demands upon them are greatest, when the opportunities of doing good are most abundant, and the prospects of success are most encouraging. Many of you have been contributing this day to a useful charity connected with this city,* and none of you, I trust, grudge what you have bestowed. You can scarcely allege that by what you have given to-day you have materially abridged your own comforts. You have done nothing that should prevent or excuse you from contributing liberally now. Indeed, I am persuaded, that those who have already this day contributed most liberally under the influence of good principle, will now be equally willing to contribute liberally to the advancement of the spiritual welfare of many; while those who have this day contributed sparingly and grudgingly will now, I trust, under the in-

* The collection this day in all the churches was for the benefit of the Royal Infirmary.

fluence of better feeling, rejoice in the present opportunity afforded them of throwing a larger sum into the treasury of the Lord. And in conclusion, let me entreat you to remember this, that while small sums will do much to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to afford the means of relief for the diseased, yet when thousands and tens of thousands of our fellow-countrymen are perishing for lack of knowledge, while they

are dependent upon your liberality for the means of grace which you enjoy, and which, I am persuaded, many of you would not barter for all that the world contained, large sums are needed, and large sums we hope will be obtained; and, oh! let the earnest prayers of many thousands of your fellow-countrymen constrain you to contribute each according to his several ability, but all liberally to the funds of this valuable Institution.

THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE;

A SERMON PREACHED

By the Rev. J. J. WOOD, A.M.,
Minister of Newton-upon-Ayr.

Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us; looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.—HEBREWS xii. 1, 2.

THERE are expressions in the text that evidently refer to what took place at the Grecian games, where prizes were given to those who excelled in the trials of skill, of strength, of agility and of swiftness. In allusion to the prodigious multitude collected at these games, the Apostle supposes the christian combatant to be placed in the midst of a most illustrious assembly, all deeply impressed with a sense of the importance of the contest in which he is engaged, all spectators of his conduct in that contest; and this he proposes to the Christian as a motive to excite him to the most unconquerable ardour and perseverance in running the race that is set before him.

In farther discoursing on this subject, we propose, in a humble dependence on divine grace, to direct your attention, in the first place, to the exhortation that the Apostle gives, and, in the second place, to the motive that he proposes, in order to enforce that exhortation.

We are to attend then, first, to the exhortation that the Apostle gives: "Let us lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." This is language derived from the practice of the public games to which we have already alluded. The competitors in the foot race were wont to lay aside every thing that might retard their swiftness. Ornaments were put off, things that they most highly valued—their loose garments also; nay, every article of dress whatever; and they actually contended in the race naked, that they might be free from every encumbrance and entanglement, so eager were they to win the prize,

and so wise and careful in adopting measures to ensure success.

Now, the conduct of these competitors in the race at the public games, the Apostle proposes for the imitation of Christians. No competitor would have been thought in earnest, or desirous of the prize, or having any prospect of obtaining it, who entered on the race with his ornaments of gold or silver hanging about him, however beautiful these ornaments might be, or who refused to lay aside his robes. If the Christian would run successfully the race that is set before him, he must lay aside every weight, every thing that would be a hinderance to him in that race. If he be in earnest, if he wishes to obtain the prize, he must strip himself of every encumbrance. There are many things which are weights or encumbrances to a man who is running the christian race—many things which are a hinderance to a life of real progressive religion. Let me mention one or two of them.

The pleasures and amusements of the world, then, are often a hinderance to the Christian in running the race that is set before him. People are very apt to look on many indulgences and pleasures as quite innocent which are not so. Are there not a number of instances, we ask, in which you engage in amusements and recreations that you apprehend are innocent in themselves, whilst at the same time, you must confess that they call off your mind from God, occupy it with things that are undeniably trifling, and unfit for serious thought, for solemn communion with God? Now, must not such amusements and recreations, and, especially, a fondness for them, and devotedness to them, be a hinderance to one who would run the

christian race? Ah! how many are there who could far better want their Bibles, and the hour of prayer, than their amusements and recreations! It is not to be thought, however, that we speak against all relaxation of body and mind. Circumstanced as Christians are in this world, relaxation is, in the generality of instances, to a certain extent necessary; but, whenever it interferes with that supreme love that we owe to God, it ought to be laid aside as an encumbrance. Whenever I come from a scene of relaxation with a mind disinclined to turn to God and have communion with him, then obviously such relaxation is acting as a weight upon me in my christian race—it is hindering me to make that progress which I ought to make in religion; and if I have any spiritual wisdom—if I wish to obey the exhortation of the Apostle in the text, I will beware how I bring myself into such a situation again. And we take leave to remark, that those who are found most frequently pleading for what they call innocent amusement, will also be found to possess least spiritual-mindedness; and that those who have advanced farthest in the christian course, and are making most rapid progress in holiness, are least given to indulgence in gaieties and amusements—are least seldom under the necessity of having recourse to them for amusement.

Another of the Christian's weights is, the cares of the world. They know little of the christian life who do not know that it is often impeded by worldly cares. You have a business, it may be, to attend to, or you have families that demand your care. These are lawful and necessary employments, and it is surely right that you attend to them diligently. But, then, are you not apt to be burdened with your cares about worldly matters? Do they not often occupy more than their own share of your time, and your thoughts, and your affections? Do you not sometimes plead the necessity you are under of attending to worldly things as an excuse for neglecting the concerns of your souls? This is very often the language that I have heard from those who are struggling with poverty. They have told me that they have so much to do with their families—such a struggle with the world, that they really can get nothing done for their souls. Ah! this is lamentable language! The immortal soul is left to perish—given up without a sigh or an effort to eternal wretchedness, whilst all the time and all the care are lavished on the poor perishing body.

But worldly cares prove a weight to others besides the miserable sons and

daughters of poverty. Look at the men who are engaged in the world's business. How full their minds are of plans, and hopes, and fears, and arrangements. Every hour there is some call upon their attention. Busy, and hustling, and occupied with innumerable matters of business, their religion, if they have any at all, is driven into a corner. Amidst all their activity, it cannot be said of them that they are active about the concerns of their souls. They increase in wealth, it may be, but they do not increase in holiness. Their business is making progress; ay, and their lives too; but they are making little progress in the christian race, for they are hung all round with weights and encumbrances. Ah! my friends, what is a man profited though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Tell me if there be any of you whose care about this world is hindering your care for the next. Oh! I dare not take any excuse. There is a necessity laid upon you to attend to the body, but say if there be not a tenfold necessity laid upon you to attend to the soul! Do you wish to obtain the prize—the prize of eternal glory and felicity? Strip you, then, of these weights. Whatever you find hindering your religion, lay that instantly aside. Suffer nothing to entangle you in your pressing forward to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Mistake me not, however. I mean not that you shall cease from all worldly business—that you shall feel no worldly cares. The Christian has his share of both, and to both he must give diligent heed. That religion is certainly to be suspected which leads to a neglect of the active duties of life. But whatever entangles the Christian—whatever cares or worldly concerns hinder his progress as a Christian, these he must lay aside. Nothing can be dearer to you than your own soul; nothing more valuable than the prize that is proposed. Lay aside every weight, then, in running your christian race; keep nothing, regard nothing, that hinders your Christianity.

The Apostle further adds, "Let us lay aside the sin that doth so easily beset us." Some have understood this to mean the sin that sits so easily upon us—the sin the commission of which does not greatly annoy our consciences, and which we are not disposed to regard as any great iniquity. We would rather consider it as meaning what is usually termed our besetting sin—that sin of which we are most frequently guilty, or into which we are most liable to fall. Now each individual of us has what may be called

a besetting sin. This sin very often mars our religious enjoyment, and hinders us from making progress in the christian life. It is, as it were, the link that connects the Christian with the depravity of that old nature, from the dominion of which he was won at regeneration. It checks the Christian, therefore, when he presses onward in the christian race, and prevents him from being so far forward in meetness for heaven as he would otherwise be. As you would run well your christian race, my friends, you must seek to lay aside your besetting sin. But, first, you must try to ascertain, each one for himself, what your besetting sin is; you must examine in what you are most liable to transgress. When this point is gained, you must set up a continual watch against your besetting sin; you must strive to mortify and weaken it. To your watching and striving you must add much fervent prayer; and thus you will, in the strength of the Lord Jesus, be able to lay even your besetting sin aside. Expect not, however, that this will be an easy process. A besetting sin is usually some bad habit that has become strong and inveterate, or some infirmity, or ungovernableness of temper, or some constitutional sin. Now, it is not the work of a day to lay aside such a sin; it requires perseverance, and care, and diligence. But tell me, my friends, is it not worth while to watch diligently, and to pray fervently and without ceasing, for a benefit so important as deliverance from sin, a state of preparation for heaven's glory and happiness? You are unworthy of the prize of the glorious recompence of reward, if you be not prepared to give all diligence, to lay aside your besetting sin, however dear it may be to you—however inveterate it may have been.

Again, the Apostle exhorts us, after having laid aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us, to *run with patience the race that is set before us*. Now, what is the race that is set before you, my hearers? Speaking of you collectively, it is the race of life. In that race you are all pressing forward. Minute after minute is passing by and carrying you along with it to the world of spirits. In that race of life we are all speeding on alike—the cumbered and the light, the bowed down, tottering, way-worn traveller of fourscore, and the sprightly youth of fifteen. On, on all are pressing to be swallowed up in eternity. There is another race, however, on which some of you, I fear, have not yet entered, and that is the race of the christian life. It commences when the soul is born again of

the Spirit of God. How many such souls does the heart-searching Jehovah behold in this assembly! O Lord God, thou knowest! That there are many such among you, we fondly believe; and to them we say, "Run with patience the race that is set before you." You have need of patience; for your heavenly home is in a far more delightful world than this; and, oh! it will be pleasant to be there. But you must wait all the days of your appointed time here till your change come. Trials, afflictions may be your lot, and under these you must have patience, for the end is not yet. You must possess your souls in patience; it will give a calmness to your feelings, and a steadiness to your character exceedingly favourable for making progress in the christian life. It will be but a little while, and then you will reach the end of your race, and receive the glorious prize. Endure, then, a few months, or at the most, a few years; that is all that will be required of you. Then one more honourable than the herald at the Grecian games, and in the presence of a multitude more illustrious than ever was there assembled, will proclaim your triumph. Then will your Redeemer give you the crown of victory, and welcome you with the happy salutation, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

2. We would now, in the second place, direct your attention to the motive that the Apostle proposes, to enforce the exhortation of the text that we have been considering: "*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.*" There are two ideas suggested by the word "witness"—either that of a person who bears testimony regarding a thing, or that of a person who was a spectator of a thing. I am a witness when I bear testimony or give evidence regarding any transaction, and I am also called a witness of an action when I was a spectator of it—when I saw it done. It is in the former of these senses chiefly that Paul uses the word "witnesses" in the text. The cloud of witnesses were persons who bore testimony, not persons who were merely spectators. The Apostle evidently refers to those whom he had mentioned in the 11th chapter. The labours, the sufferings, the triumphs of these persons bore ample testimony to the value which they attached to the things for which they laboured and suffered, and to the strength of the principle by which they were supported. Now, the truths that these Old Testament worthies believed, were substantially the

truths of the Gospel ; the faith that they exercised was just Gospel faith. We, therefore, fellow-Christians, have them by their lives, their sufferings, their triumphs encompassing us as witnesses of the efficacy of faith, and of those divine truths on which we found our hopes for eternity. All that cloud of witnesses of the importance of the Gospel and the efficacy of faith that encompassed the Apostle and the Christians of his day, this day encompasses us. And since the period when the Apostle wrote the words of my text, another cloud of witnesses has accumulated, and now encompasses the people of God, testifying that the Gospel is more precious than life—that the faith of the Gospel is stronger than the fear of torture and of death. “ Many have been tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others have had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, of bonds and imprisonments. They were stoned, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about, being destitute, afflicted, tormented : (of whom the world was not worthy.) They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and in caves of the earth.” These words were written by the Apostle as descriptive of what had been endured by the saints who lived before his time. But tell me, if we may not adopt them as descriptive of the sufferings of many who have lived since the Apostle’s time ? Look at the early martyrs for Christianity, of whom this Paul himself is one ; trace the progress of time down through the ages that have intervened since the doctrines of the cross were first preached by the disciples of Jesus, and you will find some in every age enduring sufferings for the truth’s sake. And if you were to describe the things that have been done in our own land to those who loved and maintained the truth of God amidst error and cruel oppression, where could you find terms more literally applicable than those which we have quoted from the 11th chapter of this inspired book ? Yes, my friends, our forefathers suffered all the things here written. And, in doing this, did they not bear their testimony to the truth of the Gospel, as the Gospel is read and believed by those whom I am addressing ? Are we not encompassed with a cloud of witnesses ? In the moss and on the hill, in the glen and in the church-yard, you meet with monuments of martyrs—men who counted not their lives dear, but shed their blood as the most convincing testimony of their belief of the Gospel. Yes, Christian friends, the religion of Jesus is a precious reality ! Could you meet face to face with

any of the saints who lived before the time of the Apostle, or could you have communion with any martyred countryman, or any departed friend, and ask, “ Are the things that the Bible teaches true ? ” Would you not be distinctly told that they are true, and that they are of eternal importance ? You meet not with disembodied spirits ; you hold no intercourse with them, till you be disembodied spirits yourselves ; but you have a sure record of their faith, of their sufferings, of their testimony, and around you has gathered a cloud of witnesses to the truth of the everlasting Gospel.

But let us consider the word “ witnesses ” as meaning chiefly spectators, and this will introduce us to another view of the matter. We know but little of the condition and powers of the souls of men when separated from their bodies. Whether they are wholly severed from this world and its things, or whether those who were dear to them on the earth, and the cause that engaged their affections, are still within the sphere of their knowledge, and are still objects of interest to them, we cannot tell with certainty. No one has ever returned to tell the secrets of the world of spirits, and God has revealed but little regarding the matter in his Word. Some believe that the spirits of those who have gone before us take an interest in us still, and, from the place where they are, see something of what is done by and to their beloved friends that tarry on the earth. Of one thing we may be certain, all the redeemed in bliss take a deep interest in the progress of the scheme of redemption ; and, hence, why may it not be that their regards are directed to this world of which they were once inhabitants, and where the work of redeeming souls is yet going on ? Why may we not indulge the thought that the redeemed saints of the Most High—the faithful who saw the day of the Son of Man afar off and were glad—the Apostles and martyrs of the christian Church in its early days—our own martyred countrymen—and, more particularly, the friends whom we knew and loved in the flesh, still know something of our concerns ? Why may we not indulge the thought that, from their high place of rest, they are deeply interested witnesses of the warfare in which we are engaged ? Can we believe that dearly beloved friends who loved us whilst they were our companions here below, who prayed for us, who earnestly desired and laboured for our salvation, have lost all interest in our happiness, now that they are made perfect in goodness and in love ? And, oh ! if it be that on us who are yet amidst the noise,

and the dust, and the toil of the contest, the notice and interest of our now victorious brethren and kindred are fixed, then are we, indeed, encompassed with a cloud of witnesses.

But there are other witnesses of the christian race. There are certain intimations in the Bible that the work of redeeming love is a subject of interest to the higher orders of intelligences. If this be not the case, whence was all that speeding of angels and archangels too and fro from the place of glory to our world? Why came other orders of beings and communed with the children of men about the advent of the Messiah? Why came they to tell that the period of his coming had arrived? Why sung they the joyful strains of heaven at his birth? Why did they become the protectors of the servants of Jesus? Why, in short, all this interference in the affairs of the children of men, unless these holy intelligences took a deep interest in the happiness of immortal

Are we not expressly told that "into these things the angels desire to look; that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, and that the angels are all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who are heirs of salvation?" Have we not some ground, then, from the Scriptures, to believe that the regards of the higher orders of intelligences are fixed on the little planet in which we dwell, and that they are watching with intense interest and wonder the progress of God's redeeming work, and are looking forward with holy desire to the development of the whole of the amazing plan?

And may it not be that our world is the theatre on which the great contest is going on between the powers of light and darkness—that on this spot of the creation of God a manifestation of the divine character has been given, such as has nowhere else occurred throughout the universe? May it not be that a knowledge of the sacrifice of the eternal Son has been communicated to the inhabitants of many a bright and glorious world that rolls in the immensity of space—that on the children of men as the beings who are occupying the

only and sublimely perilous spot, where evil is permitted to maintain a contest, the attention of all created intelligences throughout the universe is fixed, and that thus, whether under the brightness of noon-day or in the stilly night, there are directed from yonder sky thoughts of intensest interest from myriads of witnesses of our christian race? "Wherefore, seeing that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses"—seeing that there are so many witnesses to the truth of those things on which Christians rest their eternal welfare, and such a cloud of spectators gazing on us with deepest interest as we run our christian course, "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

But, my friends, though we have many witnesses of the truth of our most holy faith, and many deeply interested spectators of our conduct in the world, these motives are not sufficient to enable us to run successfully our christian race. We need strength communicated from the Lord. You must look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. You must look to his cross and to his throne. On his cross he was the *author* of your faith. He fully atoned for sin. He endured till he could say, "It is finished." Therefore there is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. On his throne he is the *finisher* of your faith. He hath all power in heaven and on earth. He hath been made Head over all things to the Church. He perfecteth that which concerneth his saints. He maketh all things work together for good to them who love him. Look, then, to the perfect atoning sacrifice made by Jesus; look to the power which he now wields for his people's good. That sacrifice was offered, that power is exercised by your friend. He is both the author and finisher of your faith. Keep him before your mind; think of his kindness and power; and, animated by the consciousness that he is with you, and by the full assurance of a glorious victory, "run with patience the race that is set before you."

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SERMON by the Rev. JAMES STARK, Greenock.
SERMON by the Rev. GEORGE JOHNSTON, Edinburgh.

Price :

THE CHRISTIAN'S CITIZENSHIP IN HEAVEN :

A SERMON PREACHED AT RENTON, 6TH MARCH, 1834,

By the Rev. JAMES STARK,
Greenock.

“Our conversation is in heaven.”—PHILIPPIANS iii. 20.

THE character and conduct of the true Christian, differ essentially from the character and conduct of other men. Unlike the religions which infest and brutalize our species, the religion of Jesus requires the purest of all morality—a morality extending, not only to the minutest actions, but to the very thoughts of the heart. It must be confessed, however, that there are many bearing the name of Jesus, who seem to have formed a different opinion of his religion. Though these individuals believe in general that they have advanced far in their knowledge of the economy of grace, yet they would require to retrace their footsteps and begin the journey anew, since they have stumbled on a tremendous error on the very threshold of Christianity. The principles which they profess to believe are indeed correct, but the inferences deduced from them ruinous and absurd. While they maintain the doctrines of free grace, they prostitute these doctrines to the worst of purposes; for, instead of regarding the atonement as the source of holiness to man, they regard it merely as a base sanctuary for crime. Because Jesus Christ has rendered obedience to the law, they suppose that no obedience can be demanded from them; because his righteousness has been accepted in the room of theirs, they suppose that there is no necessity for righteousness in them; because he has fully expiated their sins, they suppose that that expiation has purchased for them a freedom to sin. They know not, it would seem, that a deliverance from the pollutions as well as from the guilt and consequences of sin, is necessary to salvation; that, if we wish to enjoy the favour of God, we must be assimilated to his moral image; that, if we wish to share in

the happiness of heaven, we must be fitted for it upon earth, we must engage in its exercises upon earth, we must, in truth, have the same spiritual nature with the saints who inhabit that holy place.

This error appears to have been the rock on which some members of the Philippians church had split. The Apostle feelingly alludes to this circumstance in the preceding context. The very individuals whom he himself had been instrumental in converting to the faith—his spiritual children—had perverted the doctrines which he had taught, and dragged them into the service of Satan. There was no trial in the whole course of his life, and especially of his ministerial labours, which affected him so deeply as this. He was a man of unflinching courage in the endurance of calamities, if they befall him in the discharge of duty; but weak as a child, when these calamities resulted from the sins of his professed brethren. We have seen him firm in the field of conflict and of controversy—buffeting the tide of persecution with a vigorous and fearless arm—bearing up under its manifold horrors with a constancy more than human—standing unappalled in the presence of courtiers and of kings; and, though encumbered with fetters and weakened with stripes, making even majesty itself tremble on its throne. We have beheld him even unmoved in the prospect of martyrdom, with all the horrors of torture and death in his view; but here the scene is changed! The perversion of this sacred doctrine unnerves the champion of our faith; his manhood forsakes him—he bursts into tears! “Yea, many walk,” says he, “of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of

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Christ." Of such characters as these, the Apostle tells them to beware; and surely this advice coming as it did from his heart, and watered as it had been with his tears, could not but have its effect. They were to follow him as he also was a follower of Jesus Christ; and the reason which he adduces in our text is peculiarly strong: "for our conversation is in heaven."

The word here translated *conversation*, would with greater propriety have been translated *citizenship*. The present translation might indeed be defended, as the word *conversation* is often taken to imply conduct in general, and certainly did imply that when the Scriptures were translated. But a change in the meaning of language—and all living languages *do* change—renders a change of translation necessary also. It was probably employed by the Apostle in allusion to the far-famed privileges of Roman citizenship. Understanding it, then, in this more widened sense, we proceed to show what is implied in being a citizen of heaven.

1st. It implies that the Christian is a pilgrim and stranger upon earth.

This world is not destined to be the home of the Christian; and in his knowledge of this fact, or rather, perhaps, in his application of that knowledge to his conduct, lies a wide and important difference between him and other men. There are none among us, it is true, who know not that they shall die, and who know not, moreover, that their continuance here is uncertain; but there are few amongst us who give this subject a serious and solemn consideration. Men live in general as if they would live for ever. Amid the many monitors of our mortality which greet us at every turning in life—the chamber of sickness—the bed of death—the charnel-house of the dead, where slumber the ashes of our fathers, we stand thoughtless and unconcerned. Many are continually falling around us, but we are inclined all the while to believe that we ourselves are secure; or if we indulge in no such fancy as this, we at least manifest little concern upon the subject, and act as if we had made a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell. But the very nature of the true Christian, his accurate knowledge of his real situation, the prospects which he has in view—all conspire to banish from his mind such a monstrous delusion. He knows that here he has no continuing city nor place of abode, that he must sojourn only for a little upon earth, that he must mingle only for a little in the concerns of men, as he journeys onwards to the better

country beyond death and the grave. His situation, under the character of a pilgrim, reminds him feelingly and impressively of the shortness of his stay. While the pursuits of other men in their every-day intercourse with the world, tend to knit their affections more closely to its pleasures, and in the same proportion to conceal the feebleness of that link which connects them with it, his pursuits, if he is acting consistently with his character, tend materially to loosen his affection to all sublunary things, remind him perpetually of that country to which he belongs, and which, when a few short years shall have come and gone, he shall reach in safety.

It is evident that the Christian, being in this situation, must be exposed to many hardships. He is far from home. This world is not his portion. He cannot relish its pleasures like the votaries of Mammon, with whom he has no fellow-feeling. The heaven over his head, with its bright garniture of sun, and moon, and stars, may be mantled in glory; the earth under his feet may bloom like the garden of the Lord; but so long as his affections are not centred upon these external manifestations of the divine character, and the pleasure which the contemplation of them affords, so long will they minister to him but an inferior gratification. He may, indeed, linger for a moment on his journey, in the enjoyment of those pleasures, which, innocent in themselves, he is permitted to enjoy; but neither his own feelings, nor his external situation will permit him to continue. In the midst of his enjoyment he is interrupted by the conviction that every thing around him forces upon his mind, that he is a stranger in a strange land. The solitary exile requires not to be informed, that he has been deprived of the comforts and conveniences of home. He may not be able to *describe*, but he *feels* his loss. In the every-day intercourse of life, we are so much accustomed to the many nameless charms which entwine themselves around the domestic circle—we enjoy so often the endearments of friendship, and the sweets of parental love, that we never think of estimating their value. But when the scene is changed; when we have bidden farewell to the friends of our youth, and the home of our boyhood; when we have become sojourners in a far country; when "distance and depth of wave" intervene between us and all whom we hold dearest upon earth; the starting tear, the heaving bosom, and the saddened heart, proclaim in expressive silence the bitterness of our condition. Surrounded with strangers, in whose

manners no resemblance to those we have left can be traced—in whose features no smile of kindness or welcome can be found—in whose hearts no fibre of sympathetic affection vibrates—in whose veins no kindred blood flows, we feel at that moment as if we had been rest of every comfort, and left standing as it were alone in the wide world!

In such a situation is the Christian, so far as this world is concerned. He is connected with it merely as the stranger with the scene of his exile. It may inflict pain, but it cannot confer lasting pleasure; it may wound, but it cannot heal. It is true, we admit, that the Christian enjoys some degree of satisfaction in the temporal mercies which are showered upon his path; but he places not his happiness on them. He is altogether independent of external situation. His happiness is not exactly commensurate with the extent of his possessions, it is not exactly bounded by the landmarks of legal arbitration, but is equally great in all the conceivable circumstances of life.

We remark, in the second place, it implies that the Christian is in possession of peculiar immunities.

It is, perhaps, impossible to conceive a more overwhelming picture of human destitution, than the being without a country and without a home; and this, we have seen, is exactly the condition of the Christian, so far as this world is concerned. But the Christian *has* a country and a home. He is a citizen of no mean city—he is a citizen of heaven. His honour and happiness in being connected with it can find nothing analogous in the whole compass of civil society. Even the boasted privileges of imperial Rome, in the brightest era of her glory, when all nations dreaded the prowess of her arm, and revered the wisdom of her institutions—when the name of Roman citizen was security from insult, and a passport to every land, dwindles into nothing, when compared with the privileges of every Christian.

The inhabitant of any country is under the protection of the government to which he belongs, wherever he is placed. So is it with the Christian. He is under the protection of the Almighty. The King of the New Jerusalem is his strength in weakness, his guardian in danger, his comforter in tribulation, his support in the hour of death, and at last his exceeding great reward. Surely, then, the Christian ought never to be alarmed at the prospect of calamity! Is there any thing too powerful for Jehovah? He sees all the snares that are laid for his people; he is able and willing to render

which they suffer, will work together for their good: the very execrations of their enemies, “like the half-formed curse” that hung upon the lips of the prophet, will drop in blessings. “He is thy refuge and thy fortress. Surely he will deliver thee from the snare of the fowler and from the noisome pestilence; he shall screen thee with his feathers, under his wings shalt thou trust. There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.”

The Christian is also indebted, under God, to the care and protection of his fellow-citizens. He is encompassed with a host of angelic beings who watch over his steps, who shield him from danger, and who, though unseen, form around his dwelling-place a bulwark of living fire. Let him be where he may—in the crowded city, or solitary desert—amid the throng of congregated multitudes, or in the retirement of his closet, his guardian angels attend him. It is true, we seldom if ever think of such a thing, because they are not visible to our senses—because in our present imperfect state, we cannot penetrate the world of spirits; but that is no proof that these blessed spirits are not beside and around us. In the time of trouble, when the clouds of adversity are beginning to thicken and blacken over the head of the devoted pilgrim, he may be disposed to cry out with the prophet’s servant of old, “Alas! master, how shall we do?” But were it within the compass of human power to strengthen his vision, he would be enabled to behold the same magnificent scene that burst on the enraptured gaze of Elisha’s servant—“chariots of fire, and horses of fire.” Assuredly the pious man may exclaim with the prophet, though his enemies were countless as the sand upon the sea-shore, “there are more with us than with them.”

We doubt not but this representation of the Christian, as under the superintendence and guardianship of angels, may be regarded by many in the present day as savouring strongly of the fables of Pagan mythology, or rather as the idle dreams of modern fanaticism; but it requires no very intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures to demonstrate its truth. The infidel, indeed, who burns incense upon the altar of reason, may scout the idea, and laugh its credulous supporters to scorn; but the reason of all this may be found in the fact, that, like the troops of Samaria, on the occasion to which we have already adverted, he is “smitten with blindness.” Upon this point Scripture is explicit. “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.” “Take heed that you

believe in me, for I say unto you, that in heaven *their angels* do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven."

In becoming a citizen of heaven, the Christian is highly honoured. This honour arises out of two causes—his own nature, and the nature of heaven. In himself, man is a degraded being, sunk below his original sphere in consequence of his depravity. Steeped as he is in crime, he must be an object of unmingled abhorrence to a God of purity. Yet regenerated and sanctified, he becomes the favourite of heaven, is under its peculiar care and protection in the present life, and will be exalted at last to a seat at the right hand of God. And what is implied in this exaltation it is impossible to tell. We cannot comprehend the glories of the heavenly world. In vain shall we search for its resemblance upon earth, even among those lands of sun and softness which are thought to combine the various and distinctive features of loveliness and grandeur. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, to conceive what God hath prepared for them that love him." The Christian is connected, not merely by the ties of country, but of friendship with the eternal God! He is his father and his friend. If the smile of an earthly potentate be a boon so highly prized and so keenly struggled for among men, how much more the favour and the friendship of the King of kings and Lord of lords? Yet even this is the privilege of the Christian. Poor he may be in this world's goods, but he is rich in faith; despised he may be of men, but he is honoured of God—the citizen of heaven, the heir of immortality, and of a crown of glory that faileth not away. "All things," says an Apostle, "are yours: whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

In the third place, it implies that the Christian is distinguished by a peculiar mode of conduct.

There are some important duties incumbent upon the Christian, arising out of his charter as a citizen of heaven. There are duties peculiar to every sphere of life, varying in proportion to the relations which it comprehends, and co-extensive with the powers and privileges which it pos-

Every true citizen is obviously a patriot. An attachment to country is founded upon an attachment to home; and is merely an extension of the same feeling! We cannot tell, with any thing like precision, how this attachment springs up at first in the bosom.

at least, though in certain cases it may have considerable influence, upon the nature of the country which gives us birth. No matter whether it be beautiful or barren—whether we have been cradled upon the snow-covered summits of the mountain cliff, or in the sunny field and fertile plain, the feeling is the same. There are few passions so strong as love of country; and we may venture to assert, that none have given birth to nobler actions. Often has the patriot covered himself with glory in defence of his country's rights; and if not successful in rescuing her from the fangs of an oppressive tyranny, has been contented to expire with her expiring liberty, unable and unwilling to survive the ruin of his native land. The Christian also is a patriot; and in disinterested attachment to his country, and readiness to die a martyr in her cause, can be surpassed by none. The advancement of her interests occupies a place in his bosom, and forms the burden of his prayer. He loves to see her extending her conquests, making inroads upon the territories of Satan, causing the barren wilderness to blossom and rejoice as the rose. Like the angels of God, he rejoices over the returning and repentant sinner. He cannot endure the thought of his fellow-creatures perishing for want, while in his father's house there is enough and to spare. It is not by any means assuming too much to maintain, that there is no attachment to an earthly country, that can at all bear a comparison with this, in point of depth and purity of feeling. How should there be? There is no land, however highly favoured, but has its barrenness as well as its beauty; there is no sky, however bright, but has its cloud as well as its sunshine; there is no spot of earth upon which the curse of God is not laid. How different is that land where the afflictions of the christian pilgrim terminate, where the anchor of his hope is fixed? There is no barrenness, no cloud, no curse of God there!

But, farther, every good citizen must delight in, and must observe the laws of his country. For this also the Christian is distinguished. The laws which are framed by men, except in so far as they coincide with the Word of God, are not the standard of morality to him. He has a much higher and infinitely purer standard—the laws of the Most High God, which are "a light unto his feet, and a lamp unto his path." They are his study all the day; they are sweeter unto him than honey; they are more valuable than gold. He delighteth to observe them; and if at any time, through the force of temptation and the frailty of nature, he has violated their requirements,

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but, perceiving it in all its enormity, he repents bitterly in sackcloth and in ashes. Perhaps in this particular, more than in any other, lies the wide and important difference between those who are citizens of heaven and those who are not. Iniquity, like the pillar of cloud and fire which turned its dark side to the host of the Egyptians, and its bright side to the children of Israel, presents two very different aspects to the righteous and to the wicked. The one regards even flagrant sins as but trifling deviations from the path of rectitude, and undeserving the punishment denounced; while the other looks upon sin of every grade in its true character, as the mildew of happiness and the ruin of the soul. The one can review his past transgressions without feeling any great compunctions of heart, while the other thinks of them with the bitterest emotions—the terror of the Lord comes like water into his bowels, and like oil into his bones. It suits not the character of the Christian to tamper with sin, or what in its remote consequences may lead to it. Some of the Philippian converts, indeed, imagined that they might be permitted thus to sin. With a view to correct this error, the Apostle reminded them in our text that they were citizens of heaven; and, consequently, that as heaven is pure and holy, so pure and holy also must its citizens be.

Finally—for we cannot here mention all the duties which are incumbent upon the Christian as a citizen of heaven—every good citizen must love his fellow-citizens. In this respect also the Christian stands forth prominently to our view. Love to the brethren is in truth the distinguishing characteristic of his sect: “A new commandment,” said our Saviour to his disciples, “give I unto you, that ye love one another.” And, again, “hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.” The religion of Jesus knits its votaries in the closest and most secret ties. It authoritatively requires this mutual love; and while it does so, it furnishes them with the power and the inclination to comply with the requirement. The motives which it presents are without a parallel in the history of mankind. They are delivered from the thraldom of the same evils; they are in possession of the same blessings; they are redeemed by the same blood; they are children of the same father; they are heirs of the same glory! With this unity of principle and prospect their affection must needs burn with a pure and holy flame. They are brethren indeed! allied to each other not by the consanguinity of nature, but by the blood of the Son of

God. The paternal tie, strong though it be, is too often soiled and melted in the fire of unnatural discord; but that link which binds Christians to each other, and to the throne of God, is imperishable as the Rock of Ages to which it is attached. There is no false religion that possesses such a power of cementing its votaries, because no false religion possesses a *complete* power over the heart. It is no doubt true—and while we acknowledge we ought deeply to lament the fact—that there are animosities among the followers of the cross. Even the religion of peace contains within its bosom, in the conflicting parties who profess it, the elements of war. And what is more strange, and, if possible, more unnatural, these contentions exist among brethren of the same religious belief. Perhaps this must be in some degree the case, so long as human nature, even in the sanctified heart, retains no inconsiderable portion of corruption; but the blame, and, be it remembered, blame of no ordinary kind, must rest somewhere. We have seen that mutual love is regarded by our Saviour as the grand and peculiar feature of christian character, and, therefore, the rupture of that love must be the greater sin. The existence and continuance of hatred among brethren of the household of faith, goes far to annul their title to the citizenship of heaven. “Behold,” says the psalmist, “behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like precious ointment upon the head, as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Sion.”

We remark in the fourth place, it implies that the Christian cherishes an acquaintance and holds communion with heaven.

If there be a Christian who cherishes not an acquaintance, who holds not communion with heaven, then the carnal policy of man will furnish him with an instructive lesson. The men of the world can easily perceive the absurdity of emigrating to a land without knowing its nature. They can easily perceive the absurdity of resolving to reside in a land, the climate of which, for any thing they know, may be prejudicial to their health, or the resources of which may be even more limited than of the one which they are about to leave. But is not that individual involved in the same absurdity, though more unpardonable, because connected with higher interests, who cherishes the hope of spending an eternity in heaven, and yet knows nothing of its nature? The true Christian must know his native country, and must be convinced that its nature is congenial with his own. If he relish not those spiritual

exercises upon earth, which bear some faint resemblance, at least, to the exercises of heaven, then heaven is not his country. *Here* the devotional feeling is broken by a thousand causes; *there* nothing can disturb: *here* the voice of prayer and the song of praise rise only at intervals to the throne of God; *there* there shall be one uninterrupted song of praise, one eternal Sabbath of rest!

The employments of the celestial world are in unison with the feelings of all its citizens, whether they are on earth or in heaven. It matters not, indeed, where the christian pilgrim is externally situated: his thoughts rest in heaven. There is his treasure; there consequently is his heart also. It requires no effort on his part to indulge in pleasing meditations with regard to that country to which he belongs. The stranger sees in every object around him reminiscences of home. In fact, he requires not the assistance of external objects to remind him of it; it rises spontaneously, and as it were by enchantment in his bosom, and entwines itself around his heart. His thoughts dart with a rapidity that mocks the speed of lightning to his native land, and the visions of midnight transport him in delusive reality to the scene. So is it with the Christian. His affections are not set upon earth, but in heaven. He rises, as on eagles' wings, far above the littleness of the present world, and fixes his affections upon that better land, the honours and the happiness of which he is so soon to enjoy. "I have a desire," he exclaims, with an Apostle when about to be martyred in the most sacred of all causes, "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better."

We have remarked that the citizen of heaven holds communion with his native country. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." This communion is effected chiefly through the medium of prayer. The intercourse of kindred spirits in the companionships of men forms one of the best sources of true and rational enjoyment; but even this intercourse bears but a faint resemblance to that to which we refer. It involves lesser interests; it connects lesser beings; it is, from its nature, transitory in its duration. But the intercourse of the Christian with his God is of greater importance far, consider it in what light soever you will. It is exposed to no interruption. Death itself, which effectually severs every other association, which effectually bursts every other tie, has no power over this. The communion shall become but the closer in consequence of death, as they will then see face to face; the flame of

love will burn more intensely in the heart of the Christian every moment of its continuance—a continuance co- eternal with the existence of the soul itself. It is, perhaps, impossible to conceive of the devotional feelings in a more impressive light, more calculated to sublimate the soul, than to conceive them personified as it were in the morning and evening sacrifice. The incense which ascends from off the family altar to the throne of God calls into existence the most sacred associations, is productive of the most blissful effects. We feel when engaged in such an exercise, even the most thoughtless amongst us, at intervals at least, as if we were severed from all connexion with earth, and bound by indissoluble ties to a far distant world—as if we were already breathing the air of heaven—as if we were already reposing in the eternal sunshine of uncreated day, and are disposed to exclaim with the patriarch, when favoured with a vision from the God of his fathers, "This is none other than the house of God! this is the gate of heaven!"

But the effects of this intercourse are most valuable and most felt in adversity. If we are in affliction, and have no friend to whom we can unbosom our griefs, we are wretched indeed. Our misery is increased beyond the power of conception. But if we have a friend to whom we can tell our tale of misery, and from whom we can receive in return the tear of sympathy, we experience instantaneous relief. The pressure from the heart is removed; the spirit becomes more elastic; we breathe more freely. Such a friend has the Christian, and to this friend he can apply at all times. His ear is ever open to his plaint; his arm is ever ready to help. He binds up the Christian's wounds; he pours the balm of consolation into his bosom. It is this that arms the Christian against trouble—that enables him to rise superior to adversity—that enables him to exclaim with the prophet, even amid the wreck of all, "Although the fig-tree should not blossom, and there should be no fruit in the vine; although the labour of the olive should fail, and the field yield no meat; although the flock should be cut off from the fold, and there should be no herd in the stall, yet will I rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation."

In the last place, it implies that heaven shall be his eternal home.

This idea has in fact been pre-supposed in our previous remarks, and will, therefore, require but short consideration. This world is but the house of the Christian's pilgrimage—the resting-place

where the wayfaring man turns in only for a night. When the wearisome day of life has come to a close—when the present world, with all its accompaniments of pleasure and pain, is for ever at an end, the christian pilgrim returns home to his Father's house. There he enjoys rest from all his labours, relief from all his toils. In the eyes of a solitary exile, who has wandered for a series of years in distant and strange lands, who has during that dreary period been destitute of the comforts and conveniences of home, there is nothing more lively, nothing more calculated to awaken pleasing and tender associations, nothing more symbolical of real happiness than a father's house! Every thing valuable on this side the grave seems to him summed up in that single word. It is easy then to conceive the little regret he would have in leaving the scene of his exile, and the rapture he would feel in returning to that spot which the mind of man refuses to forget. This little regret in leaving the world, and this rapture in returning home, are felt by the Christian; his death-bed is the school of wisdom. Even the thoughtless and profane, if standing upon that hallowed ground, are forced to think. Religion then appears in all her loveliness and importance, and a confession of this loveliness and importance is extorted from their reluctant lips. However much they may refuse to live the life of the good man, yet fervently and sincerely will they pray, with the unrighteous prophet and sorcerer of old, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

Why should the Christian be afraid of death? He dies to live again—to be for ever with the Lord. Why should the Christian be afraid of death? To other men it may be an object of terror, and deservedly so; but to him at least it is the messenger of peace; it is the harbinger of glory. It is disarmed of its sting. Is it matter of wonder then, my friends, though we should perceive the martyrs of every age dying without regret, dying in peace, dying even in triumph? Is it matter of wonder though we should hear the death-song of the Christian vibrating on their tongues, even when their bodies had become the prey of the devouring fire? "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

May we not learn from this subject the great and dangerous error of supposing that the Gospel confers upon those who embrace it a freedom from the observance of the

law? Many of the Philippian Church were impressed with such a belief and acted accordingly. With this error our text wages war. In it the Apostle reminded them that they were citizens of heaven. It needed nothing more surely to convince them of their folly. As it is impossible for morality and immorality to coalesce, so equally impossible is it for those who indulge in the commission of iniquity to become partakers at last of the holiness and happiness of heaven. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure." Faith and holiness are not incompatible with each other. On the contrary, they are inseparably connected. Faith produces the purest of all obedience. Wherever faith exists, there exists also purity of conduct, as its native and necessary consequence. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the law."

May we not learn farther from this subject what are the character and prospects of the true Christian? His affections are not set on earthly, but on heavenly objects; his treasure is not on earth, but in heaven. He is distinguished for love to God, love to his brethren of the household of faith, love to all the requirements of the divine law. In short, he is a man of prayer. Such is his character as a citizen of the New Jerusalem; and if such, my friends, be your character, you are blessed indeed. You are in possession of those glorious immunities which our text opens up to your view. Your happiness is above the reach of conception; it is beyond the power of decay. What though in this world you should be poor and despised, subjected to many hardships and exposed to many sorrows? Lift up your heads, for the year of your redemption draweth nigh. But a few steps more in this vale of tears, and your pilgrimage shall be for ever terminated; but a few afflictions more, and you shall enter into eternal rest; but a few struggles more, and you shall obtain the palm of victory and the crown of glory. Death itself is but the entrance into life. "Thus saith the Lord, unto them that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant, even unto them will I give in my house and within my walls a name and a place better than of sons and daughters, even an everlasting name that shall not be cut off." Nothing shall ever impair your happiness; it is indestructible as the throne of God. "Lift up your eyes to the heaven above, and look upon the earth beneath, for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke; the earth also shall wax old as a garment, and they

that dwell therein shall die in like manner, but 'your' salvation shall be for ever; 'your' righteousness shall not be abolished."

We cannot conclude, however, without adverting for a moment to the prospects of those who are *not* citizens of heaven. If there are any such amongst us—and even christian charity forbiddeth not the supposition—then we are citizens of hell! This is the dreadful alternative; and as it is impossible to conceive the happiness of the one, so equally impossible is it to conceive the misery of the other. We too who are in

this condition are pilgrims; we are advancing rapidly upon our journey, we will speedily reach its termination. We are hastening to destruction; we are careering onwards with the speed of lightning to our eternal ruin. Let us stop short in this unholy pilgrimage. Let us set our faces towards Sion, and run in the heavenly race. "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved." The arms of mercy are still stretched out to save; the offer of pardon is made; let it be accepted. The Saviour is still knocking at the door of our hearts, and wo is unto us if he shall be left to knock in vain!

THE DUTY OF EARLY REMEMBERING OUR CREATOR;

A SERMON, PREACHED IN THE REV. MR. NISBET'S CHURCH, COWGATE, ON SABBATH EVENING, 23rd MARCH, 1834, IN SUPPORT OF THE CANONGATE YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY.

By the Rev. GEORGE JOHNSTON,

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'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.'—Ec. xii. 1.

THE book from which these words have now been read was written by Solomon, the son of David, who, though the wisest of men, and the most celebrated of kings, you are aware, was, through the influence of temptation, led into the way of sin, and became a worshipper of the gods of the heathen—the workmanship of men's own hands. "He went after Ashtaroth, the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites. He built a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Moloch, the abomination of Ammon. Thus he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord as did David his father." 1 Kings xi. 5—8. On these accounts the Lord stirred up adversaries against Solomon, who brought him into trouble. But, as in many other cases, adversity proved a blessing; for, by the grace of God, it seems to have opened his eyes to the sinfulness of his behaviour. He returned to the path of obedience; and the book before us was written by him towards the close of his life, after he had experienced that every thing below the sun is vanity, and that certain and enduring comfort is alone to be found in the love and service of the One only living and true God. It contains an eloquent and affecting description of the unsatisfactory nature of all mere worldly joys, and, particularly, of the shortness and uncertainty of the life of man upon the earth. These two topics constitute the principal subjects of the book. They are continually pressed upon our attention, ac-

companied with a great variety of considerations, admirably calculated to banish thoughtlessness from our minds—to lead us to look forward, and incite us to prepare for that unknown eternity to which we are rapidly being carried, and at which sooner or later we *must all* arrive. In the preceding chapter the royal preacher entreats us not to delay in directing our views to the future world. The present moment is only ours; and though the pleasures of sense may now be keenly relished, and be felt to be as delightful to our animal nature as the light of the sun is sweet and pleasant to the eyes; yea, though we were to live many years in the uninterrupted enjoyment of temporal prosperity, yet it is our duty to remember that days of darkness are approaching apace. They may be many even in this life. Days of sickness, and nights of "tossing to and fro upon our pillow," may precede the night of death; and if we have received "all our good things" here, an eternity of darkness and despair will descend upon our soul.

If even uninterrupted worldly prosperity, then, without any well-founded hope of felicity beyond the grave, be vanity, what is the duty of all? Plainly that we, whatever be our age or circumstances, take good heed to our ways; and, knowing by experience that youth, in general, are most sanguine in their expectations of happiness from the things of time, and that they will not easily be convinced that "all is vanity" till they make the trial for themselves, the preacher next turns to them and addresses them in the affecting language: "Rejoice,

O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment;" as if he had said, Well! follow the bent of your desires; give way to your natural inclinations; throw yourselves into the lap of sensual enjoyment; pursue honour, wealth, fame; do as I have done; go through the same follies as far as you can; but, *remember!* never forget that there is

judgment to come, and that that God who now sees you, and is the omniscient inspector of all your behaviour, will call you to a strict account. Even youth, then, should beware of the vanities of this world, and should behave in such a way as to remove "sorrow from their heart," and save them from the wrath of God in the world to come. It becomes, therefore, the most interesting of all questions, How are youth to conduct themselves so as to escape this wrath, to remove sorrow from their heart here, and secure the welfare of their immortal souls? To this inquiry the words read as our text return the answer: It is by "remembering our Creator now in the days of our youth, before the evil days come, or the years draw nigh, when we shall say, We have no pleasure in them."

If these blessings so important are to be obtained by the right remembrance of God, let me collect your candid and undivided attention, while I endeavour,

I. To explain the nature of the duty to the performance of which we are here exhorted; and then,

II. We shall consider the period of life at which we are admonished to remember our Creator.

I am then to endeavour,

I. To explain the nature of the duty we are here exhorted to perform: "Remember thy Creator."

Those who are accustomed to read the sacred Scriptures with attention, cannot have failed to perceive that the inspired writers frequently express the whole of the duty which we owe to God, by a variety of terms which may be denominated generic, and which include in them all those feelings and dispositions necessary to the performance of any particular duty which, as creatures, we owe to Him, in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Thus "knowledge" is frequently expressive of the whole of practical religion, as in Prov. v. 2, "My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding; that thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge." In like manner the phrases,

"the fear of God, and the love of God," are used with the same latitude of meaning. And the reason is obvious. They imply in the mind the existence and operation of all those dispositions and sentiments which necessarily lead to the doing of all those things which God has commanded in his Word. He who knows God, and fears God, and loves him, in the Scripture sense of these terms, will neither contemplate his character with indifference, nor despise his authority, nor disregard his laws.

Now it is, I apprehend, exactly in the same extended sense that the word "Remember" is employed in our text. It includes in it a recollection of God, which is accompanied with all those sentiments and feelings towards him, which the remembrance of such a Being is calculated to impress upon the minds of intelligent creatures such as we are. It implies the setting of the Lord always before us, so as to lead us to reverence, adore, love, and obey this all glorious and incomprehensible One.

And my hearers cannot fail to perceive the peculiar propriety of expressing the whole of religion by the term "Remember;" for, to remember a person does not imply merely that we have the idea of that person before our minds, but also includes the existence and operation of all those feelings and sentiments which the recollection of him is calculated to excite. To remember a friend is not merely to have him present to our memory, but supposes also the conscious feeling of affection for his person, and a readiness to do every thing in our power to promote his interests and happiness. To remember a benefit bestowed upon us, is to feel gratitude towards our benefactor, and a being ready to requite his kindness when we have it in our power.

Keeping, then, these remarks in view, I now proceed to state, that, to "remember God" is not to have the fact merely present to our minds that there is such a Being—that he is one possessed of every imaginable perfection, calculated to excite the veneration and draw forth the esteem, love, and obedience, of all his creatures—that he has all power in heaven and in earth—that he can create a world and destroy it, kindle up a sun and quench it by his word—but is also to have this recollection accompanied with those emotions of reverence, and humility, and fear, and admiration, which the creatures ought ever to experience, when we lift our minds on high to the contemplation of the majestic character, the infinite perfections, the overwhelming glories, and marvellous doings of the ever-living God. It is not to have before our minds the mere

fact that he is the Creator of all things, whether they be visible or invisible, and of all creatures, from the highest of the seraphim before his throne, down through the almost infinite variety of animated beings to the meanest insect that crawls upon the earth ; it is not merely to remember the important truth that He is *our Creator*—that he formed *our* bodies and created our spirits, but it implies also the existence of those feelings of gratitude, and wonder, and love, which should ever animate our bosoms, when we think of his all-creating power and wisdom, and of his loving-kindness to *us*, who are the works of his hands. It is not merely to recollect that the eye of Jehovah sees through the universe, but that this eye is ever fixed on *us*—that he has beset *us* behind and before, and laid his hand upon us—that he knows our down-sitting and our uprising—that he is above us and beneath us, in us and around us, and seeing all we do, knowing every word we speak, knowing all we think, and that in a short time he will call us before his judgment-seat, and require us to give a strict account of our violation or observance of his precepts, and reward us accordingly, either with everlasting destruction from his presence, and from the glory of his power, or with a crown of glory that faideth not away.

It thus appears that the remembrance of God, referred to in the text, is a personal thing—a bringing of God home to the heart, and the giving up of that heart to all the exalting and purifying influences which such a recollection of God is so powerfully calculated to impart. It is to take God into consideration, and to consecrate to him the beginning of our strength, the flower of our existence, while our hearts are yet comparatively soft and tender, and more easily impressed, than when hardened and rendered insensible by the long practice of iniquity. It is to be ever mindful of the God that made us, and whatever we do to do it in his fear and for the advancement of his glory—to love, honour, obey, and faithfully worship his divine majesty, and walk, even now in the days of our youth, as those who have set the Lord before their eyes, and have his glorious character continually present to their minds.

But it is necessary to direct our attention to the relation in which God is represented as standing to *us* in the text, and in which we are exhorted to remember him. “Remember thy Creator,” is the exhortation of the preacher ; and if I do not greatly mistake the design of the sacred writer, he has an especial reason for admonishing youth to

remember God in this point of view. The idea of God, abstractly considered, is one which the great majority of mankind feel it difficult to grasp ; and hence the argument which infers his existence, by assuming the cause, and reasoning from that to the effect, requires acuteness of intellect, and a close application of the reasoning powers which few can command, and is, therefore, useless to the great majority of mankind. But, when we reason from the effect to the cause, or, in other words, speak of God in the character of *the Creator*, this at once connects us with Jehovah, and affords a view of the character of our relation to him, which even the youngest may comprehend. Thus, when contemplating the works of God, we are furnished with more satisfactory evidence of his existence and character by the inspection of the meanest plant, than by abstruse reasonings however conclusive, which rises by easy steps from creation up to the Creator, and it is an ascent up which we may lead even a child to him. By presenting God to us, moreover, in the relation of *our Creator*, we feel that there is in this very fact an implied obligation to remember him ; for if he made us, to whom is our obedience due but to him ? If he made all things, he must be God, and besides him there can be none else. He must be the greatest and the best ; must be possessed of every excellence, intellectual and moral ; must be the first and the last ; the alpha and the omega ; the beginning and the ending ; the Almighty who was, who is, and who is to come. Thus all his works praise him ; day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night teacheth us knowledge regarding Him.

But, farther, the idea of God, as our Creator, is calculated to remind us of our entire dependence upon him. If he made us, all we are, and all we have, and all we expect to possess or enjoy, must come from him. Every breath we draw must be his. Every particle of food which nourishes us must come from him. Every faculty of our soul, every qualification, whether moral or intellectual, must be bestowed upon us by his hand. With what propriety, then, does the royal preacher exhort youth to remember God as their Creator ? Contemplating the infinite God in this light, shows us what we are, and what this glorious Being is, and is admirably calculated to fill us with gratitude and love—to make us humble and obedient, devoted to his fear, and desirous of his glory.

But while the text exhorts us only to the duty of remembering God as our Creator, it would be wrong not to remind my young friends that we ought to remember Jehovah

also as our *Redeemer*. This is a view of his character suited to our condition as sinners, and should never be overlooked; and in this relation to us, oh! how lovely and attractive does our God appear, and how worthy of being remembered with gratitude and joy! When we sinned against him, he pitied us; when we had ruined ourselves, in him was our help found; when we had excluded ourselves from heaven, and become the heirs of hell, he made provision for our deliverance from the curse, and our being reinstated in the possession of the blessing. And in the making of that provision, how glorious is the display which he has given of his character as a Being worthy of all our love! Before sin could be pardoned, an atonement must be made. That atonement must be made by enduring the curse that had alighted upon us. This curse was death; and to death did God give up his own Son for us; "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his own Son to be a propitiation for our sins." On this wonderful manifestation of mercy and love I cannot now dilate. But suffer me to entreat all to remember this great and merciful Being. To him you owe your all; in him you live and move; you are nothing, and can be nothing, and can enjoy nothing without him. He is the fountain of life—the source all joy. Forget him and you will be miserable; remember him and be happy for evermore.

But allow me to direct your attention,

II. To the period of life in which we are admonished to remember our Creator.

We are to remember him in the days of our youth; by which, the sacred writer intimates, that it is the duty of all to begin this great and necessary work as soon as they are capable of forming an idea of the relation in which he stands to us as our Creator and preserver. But, it will be observed, that there is a peculiar emphasis in the exhortation. We are not merely admonished to remember our Creator when we are young, it is our duty to remember him even *now* in the time of our youth; and by this, Solomon plainly points out to us the necessity of beginning to think about God, and our obligations to him as our Creator at the *present moment*. We are not to delay the performance of this important duty till tomorrow or any future period, under the delusive notion that even then we will begin. Thousands cheat themselves in this way; and put off the remembrance of God

from time to time, till they lose every opportunity, and are startled into thought by the awful realities of a death-bed, and the terrors of the judgment-day. But let not this dangerous course be followed by any of you. If, then, you have not yet begun to remember your Creator, oh! lose not another moment! Defer not consideration about God and religion till some future and, as you may imagine, some more convenient opportunity. Have you made a covenant with death, that this destroyer is not to make you his victim till you be old. And even granting that you had, that you were assured of many days, let me remind you that old age is the most unfit and improper of all seasons for *beginning* to be religious. Then we need all the consolation which religion can afford. These are evil days, and it is the favour of God only that can make them supportable; these are years when the world affords no pleasure, and it is the love of God only that can make us contented and resigned. How preposterous, then, to put off all consideration about God and eternity till the time of old age! How great the folly of having then to require that very thing which alone can light the evening of our days, which alone can comfort and console our minds amid the dreary scenes of life, and smooth our passage to the grave.

In order, then, to induce all the youth now around me to comply instantly with the exhortation of the text, let me entreat your attention to the following considerations.

Need I remind you that you owe *all* your time and strength to your Creator. This we are exceedingly prone to forget. But nothing is more plain. If he made us, he must have a sovereign right to demand every moment of our time, the uninterrupted service of all our faculties, and the entire devotion of our hearts. What it is his right to demand, it cannot be our duty to withhold. But is not the morning of life the most precious period of our existence? Then our strength is greatest, our love most ardent and unfettered. Let us not, then, withhold from God the best of our days; let us consecrate ourselves to the remembrance of his name. And when we hear Him crying unto us, as he is now, "My son give me thine heart," let the prompt and entire surrender of that heart be our reply.

But I would remind you farther, that youth is the fittest time to begin to remember God. Youth, it is true, is the period of inconsideration and rashness; but it is also true, that then the heart is most impulsive, and, humanly speaking, most easily turned to the love and service of God. Like

the young and tender plant, it is then comparatively easy to bend it into any course ; whereas old age resembles the oak, whose roots are fastened deep into the earth, and whose stem is so compact and hardened that it will rather break than bend. Hence the vast importance of the period of youth, and the necessity of early attention to the cultivation of a knowledge of God. And more, recollect, too, that in youth the future man is forming, that you now are getting those principles implanted in your minds which will grow with your growth and strengthen with your strength, and, according to their nature, will go to form your future character ; either making you lovely and worthy of being loved, a blessing to society and a comfort to yourselves, or rendering you odious and deformed, a curse upon the earth and detestable to heaven. Let me entreat you, then, to remember your Creator while you are young, and you will not forget him when you are old ; and what is more, he will never forget you, but will protect and bless you, and guide you at last to his heavenly glory.

But let me remind you farther, that early piety is most acceptable to God.

There is no sight so pleasing to a right-thinking mind, as the spectacle of a youth nobly resisting the solicitations of vanity, the fascinations of the world, and the promptings of passion, and resolutely dedicating himself to the service of his God. And that such conduct is well-pleasing to heaven, we have sufficient proof. David, when a young man, remembered his Creator, and, when watching his father's flock, delighted in making the plains of Bethlehem echo his praise ; and none need be told how greatly he was blessed of the Lord. He protected him on earth, guided him in life, blessed him in death ; and now David tunes his lyre in heaven. Josiah, we are informed, was only eight years of age when he began to seek the Lord God of his father ; and the Lord so signally blessed him, that his reign over Judah, though in a perilous time, was long, and prosperous, and happy. Need I remind you of Joseph, of Daniel, and the three Hebrew youths whom the Son of God preserved in the midst of the fire. Go ye, then, my young friends, and do likewise. "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth," and your path through this world will be comparatively smooth ; God will be your never-failing consolation here, and your everlasting portion hereafter.

But, again, we ought to remember our Creator in the days of our youth, because

this may be the only opportunity we shall ever enjoy of remembering God, and of making our peace with him. Need I remind you, that death knocks at the door of the young as well as of the old—that all flesh is as grass, and the glory of man is as the flower of grass—that the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away. Does not the infant die ? Does not the youth, high in hope and in the midst of his strength, often feel himself arrested in his course, deprived of his vigour, and his hopes blasted by the ruthless tyrant death, who sends him to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets ? We know not what a day or an hour may bring forth. We may expire to-night. To-morrow's sun may rise upon our tomb ; and as the tree falls, there it must lie. How gross is the infatuation, then, that leads any youth to defer thinking about God and religion, till he arrive at the gravity and sobriety of old age ! Permit me, then, my young friends, as the conclusion of the whole matter, most affectionately to entreat you to begin, even now, to remember your Creator. Acquaint thyself with him. Defer not so necessary a work. Begin this night to think of him, of his glory, his love, his greatness, his goodness, his condescension towards you, and your obligations to him ; and let this lead each of you from this time henceforth to say, " My Father, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth ! "

In fine, suffer me to exhort those who have neglected the golden opportunities of youth, and have arrived at vigour of manhood, or even old age, without having yet begun to remember their Creator. Your best period is gone by. But the day of hope is not yet ended with you, and the darkness of an eternal night settled down upon your souls. But remember the shadows are gathering thick and fast around you. Repent, therefore, now, and turn unto God, lest your opportunities of doing so be lost for ever. Christ the Saviour is still sitting upon the throne of his mercy, and extending the sceptre for you to touch. Refuse now and it may be withdrawn for ever. The hour of mercy is far spent, and the time of retribution is at hand. Redeem the few moments which are still left to you ; redeem them by fleeing to the hope set before you in the Gospel ; redeem the time and save eternity, by fleeing instantly to the cross, and that cross will lift you up to heaven. " Oh ! that men were wise, that they understood this, and that they would consider their latter end ! "

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SATURDAY, 7TH JUNE, 1834.

SERMON by the Very Rev. D. MACFARLAN, D.D., Glasgow.

No. 115.

SERMON by the Rev. W. H. BURNS, Kilsyth.

Price 2d.

LECTURE by the Very Rev. G. H. BAIRD, D.D., Edinburgh.

BACKSLIDERS AND THEIR GUILT;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE EAST CHURCH, GREENOCK, IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE
DISPENSATION OF THE SACRAMENT.

By the Very Rev. DUNCAN MACFARLAN, D.D.,
Principal of the University, and Minister of the Inner High Church, Glasgow.

“So will we not go back from thee.”—PSALM lxxx. 18.

THIS psalm contains a fervent supplication for deliverance in a season of calamity and distress. The Psalmist sets forth the affliction of God's people, acknowledging their unworthiness and frequent imperfections, implores the return of the divine favour and countenance, and solemnly professes that they would not again go back from the Almighty. Going back or drawing back from God, is frequently represented in the Old Testament Scriptures as a sin, and as exposing those who are guilty of it to the severest punishment and the most awful judgments. The backslidings of the Israelites are represented as followed by those visitations which the judgment of God saw meet for their edification and correction. When they returned from their iniquities and implored his forgiveness, the confession of their sins was uniformly accompanied with the resolution that they would not go back from him. In like manner, in the New Testament, apostates and they that disobeyed the faith, are said to draw back unto perdition, and are threatened with the divine displeasure and vengeance. Now the guilt of this sin is not incurred by hypocrites, by those who use a religious profession merely as a cloak to impose on men or to promote their worldly designs, neither is it imputable to Atheists, to atheistic unbelievers, nor those determined to resist the Gospel. Their sin, great in degree as it is, is of a nature completely different. They alone can be said to go back from God, who have embraced religion, and afterwards, from whatever unworthy motive, withdrawn from the profession they had made, dis- from their thoughts, and habi-

tually and decidedly departed from the faith and practice of Christianity; as, from whatever unworthy motive their conduct may proceed, they deny him in whom they professed to believe, they have become chargeable with guilt, and are subject to penalties. Now you profess to be the followers of Jesus; you claim the appellation of Christians; you make this claim by engaging in public worship, and addressing yourselves in various offices of devotion to the God and Father of your Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; you have this day in the most solemn manner professed your faith in Christ, and your determination to follow him and adhere to him through all the vicissitudes of life: but you are still in a state of frailty and imperfection; you are still encompassed with danger and temptation. Daily do we see numbers who had made the same profession, who had come under the same engagements, forsaking that profession and the path of duty it prescribes, and making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience towards God. That you may be preserved from thus drawing down on your own heads the displeasure of the Almighty, and that you may be induced and enabled to fulfil the resolution of the Psalmist, is the object which I have in view in the following observations. In them I have proposed shortly to point out those who may be justly charged with going back from God, in order to dissuade you from following their example, and prevail on you to perform the terms and purpose expressed in the text.

The first class of these are, beyond all dispute, apostates—those who having been

once instructed in the Gospel, and having enjoyed the benefits of its means of grace, and continued for some time professors of Christianity, have afterwards renounced the faith through an evil heart of unbelief. These are beautifully described in the parable of the sower as light and stony-ground hearers, who are like the seed which fell on stony places and quickly sprung up because it had not deepness of earth, and when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had not root it withered away. They who thus receive the seed into stony places, our Lord tells us, are those who when they hear the Word immediately receive it with gladness, yet having no root in themselves it endureth only for a while; and when tribulation or persecution arises because of the Word, immediately they are offended. Thus, when our Lord began to denounce the prejudices and backwardness of his countrymen, many who had for a time been his followers went back and walked no more with him. Those who joined the body of the primitive Church, continued steadfast and faithful in doctrine; but some of the first professors of Christianity became discouraged by difficulties, and the dangers and persecutions to which they were exposed. They looked to their worldly comfort and interest, and hence thought themselves obliged to lend willing ears to the objections of adversaries, and abandon the cause of Christ altogether. In like manner, there are many who are encouraged to become, and gladly continue for some time, outward members of the visible Church; but in process of time, and when exposed to temptations, they venture on slight deviations from duty, and advance step by step to the commission of serious offences, till at length their judgment becomes perverted, perhaps hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; yet they soon discover that the indulgence of sinful inclinations, or the promotion of worldly objects by unlawful means, is altogether inconsistent with the Christian character. The religion of Jesus presents insurmountable objections to fraud, deceit, or dishonesty—to the indulgence of sinful passions or of unlawful pleasures; yet they are attached to their worldly enjoyments, and, desirous of shaking off the restraints of religion, they begin by impugning particular doctrines, and imagine that the precepts of Christianity are not so strict, or its denunciations against sin so very positive as they seem, and fancy that they shall find some

way of escaping punishment not commonly understood, some easier way than passing through the strait gate which Christ has pointed out. By degrees they go on to deny religion altogether, and to magnify for themselves difficulties into serious objections; or, when arguments are awanting, they have recourse to railing or abuse, set up the disciples of Jesus as the objects of unqualified scorn and contempt, and endeavour to turn his doctrines and commandments into ridicule and subjects of profane laughter. Thus, seeking to emancipate themselves from the control of religious principle, their own violence betrays the misgivings of their hearts, and lets us discern their true character. Such is the sin of apostasy—such the progress of unbelief—such the way in which too many go back from God, and insult the Saviour they have once professed to believe.

In the second place, there are, we fear, many who go back from God by shrinking from an open and fair avowal and confession of their faith. A manly, precise, distinct profession, is not only commanded to Christians, but required of them in the most peremptory manner. “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Still more explicitly speaks our Lord himself in Matthew x. 32: “Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”

Yet in defiance of these most solemn declarations, many who in their hearts believe and tremble, are induced to shrink from the open and public profession of their faith in Christ and obedience to him. In all ages when difficulty or persecution was connected with the outward profession of Christianity, multitudes have shrunk from the avowal of their principles, and madly denied him with their lips whom in their hearts they could not cast off. Even in the present age, the ridicule of the scorner, the laugh of the shallow-minded, and the contempt of the profane and the irreligious, cause many to bury in silence what they know to be true. They are afraid lest they be accounted puritanical, singular, narrow-minded or superstitious; they are afraid lest they appear pious among

the profane, or superstitious among the learned and the refined; they dread the laugh, the ridicule, the contempt of weak and worthless mortals whom they cannot possibly esteem, for whom they cannot seriously bear inward deference, more than the reproofs of a disapproving conscience, more than the awful displeasure of God. Of this class many stop not in their career of madness and of guilt, till they say in their hearts, "There is no God."

Nearly allied to this is another class who go back from God, by changing their religious profession in consequence of worldly passions or ignorance. Different religious opinions and forms of worship have, at all times and ages, prevailed in the world. Even the visible Church of Christ has, almost from its foundation, been split into numerous sects and parties, distinguished sometimes by differences or degrees of opinion, but more frequently by forms of expression, or by trifling and immaterial distinctions. These differences of opinion are multiplied till they become almost innumerable, and are often prosecuted with bitterness, a spirit of persecution disgraceful to those by whom it is indulged, and inconsistent with the genuine spirit of the Gospel. All are liable to err—none are secure from falling into mistake; and, therefore, he whose judgment is convinced that he has embraced an erroneous opinion or pursued an unsuitable form of worship, is not only justified in changing it, but bound to renounce his errors, to adopt a purer system of belief, and a more scriptural form of worship. Such we do not condemn; but there are many who, in the changes they make of worship, cannot be regarded with such charity, and upon whose conduct we cannot put such a favourable construction. There are many who from pure fickleness and love of change, are carried about with every wind of doctrine; many have no root in themselves, and therefore become the deluded followers of every new instructor, of every arrogant pretender to superior knowledge or holiness. Many there are who indulge an ambitious spirit, and are most desirous to be leaders in the society to which they belong; but finding this impossible where they have been long and well known, and inconsistent with the principles of a well regulated society, they betake themselves to some new system which they wish to dictate to the consciences of their brethren. Some there are who wish to be

well thought of and highly esteemed by the world, and accordingly adopt a system which is supposed to imply a superior degree of knowledge and purity. There are also not a few who, influenced by worldly attachments and connexions, accompany and follow their companions and friends, and separate themselves from others with whom they had some trifling quarrel, or conceived something wrong. Now, that such will exist, is a truth for which I think I may appeal to the observation of every intelligent being. I am sure I may appeal to the conscientious recollection of *some* in almost every religious assembly—and I trust there is no one to whom I may not appeal for the justice of the observation, that those who thus act are chargeable with going back from God. They go in direct opposition to our Saviour's admonition, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." This is the object of religious worship. Instead, however, of making religion the first great principle of their hearts and the business of their lives, they assign it, at most, only a subordinate place, and render all change the instrument of mere temporal interest or the gratification of selfish passion.

Farther, all those may be said to go back from God who act habitually inconsistent with their religious profession. The Almighty has told us what is good, and he has required us to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before him. To present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God is, indeed, a reasonable service. The Gospel is a doctrine according to godliness. The faith of Jesus is a faith which purifieth the heart, which worketh by love, and is made manifest by its fruits. "The Lord Jesus gave himself for us that he might redeem us from iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." "Not every one," says he, "that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them I never knew you: Depart from me that work iniquity." A licentious and immoral Christian, a profane and ungodly believer, a false and deceitful follower of Jesus, a lover of God who is cruel or unjust to men, are characters which, by the very words by

which they are expressed, involve a contradiction, and cannot by possibility have any existence. But there are many who think to reconcile this contradiction to enjoy the pleasures of sin and of iniquity, at the very time when they could enjoy the pleasures and hopes of religion. The unworthy lives of professing Christians have been a subject of lamentation and reproach in all ages. There are many lovers of God with their mouths, while their hearts go after their covetousness; many who honour him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him; many who have a form of godliness, but are strangers to the power thereof; and many are there, too, who have recourse to this false profession of religion in order to blind their eyes to their own worthlessness, and disguise to themselves their own danger and inconstancy. Some value themselves on their own condition. Why? Because they have a belief of certain doctrines. Some persuade themselves that the remorse and uneasiness and compunction which generally follow the commission of any offence, although unproductive of amendment, may yet amount to genuine repentance; many delude themselves with false doctrines, thinking God such an one as themselves, or at least not such as he is represented in the Gospel of truth; and not unfrequently they pass through life thoughtless and unconcerned about futurity, contented with mere general professions. Surely this is the deceitfulness of sin, the artifice of a self-deluded spirit to obtain false security while daily going back from God.

Lastly, they may be more especially charged with going back, who return to the wilful commission of sin, after having been engaged in the ordinances of devotion, namely, those professing Christians who have made public and solemn declaration of love, obedience, and attachment, to Jesus, and of a determination to act faithfully as Christians. As often as ye draw near openly to God, you show him that you regard him as your Father and Lord, and that you purpose to live as willing subjects of his righteous government; and when you enter God's house, and join with your fellow-mortals in calling on his name, you surely profess yourselves members of his church, and expect blessing in the way in which he has promised to bestow it. When you were baptized, you engaged to devote your souls and bodies to his service. When you, as this day you did, approach the table

of the Lord, you profess your faith in Christ, your repentance of all past sins, your purpose of new obedience to him, your goodwill to your fellow-mortals, and your anxiety to be prepared for his second coming. Now, if all these professions are forgotten—if the hands you lifted up to the Most High be lifted up in deeds of dishonesty—if the lips you opened to God be profaned by the language of iniquity, calumny, or falsehood—if you who this day sat down at the table of the Lord deliberately return to the practice of what you know to be evil in his sight, you will show that you are guilty of the crime of going back from him, and of most deliberately belieing the professions you have made; and then even the prayers you have uttered, and the praises you have sung, must aggravate your condemnation in the day of the Lord. We hope better things of you. We trust you have this day drawn nigh to God with clean hands and a pure heart; with honest intentions of acting up to the professions you have made; and that in time to come you will be enabled to show your faith and integrity as the followers of Jesus.

Yet we know you must be exposed to temptation—that many whose professions have been as sincere, and whose opportunities have been as favourable as yours, have gone back and forsaken the Saviour. Let me intreat you to avoid following their example, because, first, it is weak and contemptible. In the most ordinary affairs of life can you ever have confidence, can you ever have esteem for the fickle, changeable, and irresolute? No. It is the man of resolve, the man who adheres to his principles in every trial and vicissitude, who acts consistently in all the relations of life, who sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not; he it is whom you esteem, whom you take for your companion in any important undertaking, whom you would recommend to the notice of those to whom you are most attached. The man whose opinions are wavering, whose affections are inconstant, whose attachments are fickle or uncertain and variable, is universally despised and avoided. With him no wise man engages in any undertaking, nay, the very mention of his name is the expression of pity and regret, most frequently of aversion. Shall he then be expected to have the esteem of one who is faithful in the sight of heaven? Is that man deemed foolish, and can we regard him as a wise

man who is fickle and indeterminate in pursuing the interests of his immortal soul? As heaven is high above the earth, so more contemptible is he who draws back from that God whom he has promised to serve.

In the second place, I pray you to remember that it is very sinful to go back from God; for dishonesty and unfaithfulness to engagements are uniformly regarded as criminal, and are generally punished. Shall he, then, who vows escape the vows he has made before heaven? Does that dishonesty, which would be resented and punished in the presence of men, if any one was guilty of it, become innocent in the presence of the great God of heaven? Such is not the language of Scripture. "If ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: know for a certainty, that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you." "The just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

But remember it is extremely dangerous to go back from God. The first step of unfaithfulness is generally attended with some difficulty and remorse; but each succeeding advance becomes more unstable. He who once goes back from God, finds every day a return more difficult. "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance." It cannot be ex-

pected that he who is such a slave to sin as to stifle the convictions of his own mind, will easily acquire sufficient fortitude and strength of mind to resist temptation and encounter difficulties, to which every upright Christian must be exposed here. They who have once laid aside their religious profession, will soon find it useless to resist in their present condition, and each successive change becomes more easy than the last. "If we sin wilfully after that have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." They see and remember the faults they have committed before God, and man, and angels. You must, therefore, refrain from wilful sin; you are not to feel joy in it, nor to wait till your hearts be hardened. God forbid that such be your character, in order that you may not be of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of their souls. Let me entreat you, then, to form the resolution here expressed by the Psalmist, that you will not go back from God. Whatever your difficulties or trials, whether pleasures allure or dangers intimidate, it is yours to follow unmoved the great Captain of your salvation. Think of the recompense set before you—the crown of life set before him who shall be faithful unto death. Look steadfastly unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith, who, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Let no action contaminate your hands; let no wish be cherished in your hearts, unbecoming your characters as Christians. "Therefore, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know, your works will not be in vain in the Lord."

ON THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF KILSYTH, ON OCCASION OF A COLLECTION FOR BEHOOF OF THE NORTH AMERICAN COLONIAL SOCIETY, BY APPOINTMENT OF THE SYNOD OF GLASGOW AND AYR,

By the Rev. W. H. BURNS,

Minister of Kilsyth.

“Thou shalt not bear any grudge against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”—LEV. xix. 18. “And that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh.”—ISAIAH lviii. 7. “And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”—MATT. xxi. 39.

THUS speak the law, the prophets, and the New Testament. It is one law—the law of love.

I propose by divine aid *first* to explain, and *secondly*, to recommend the duty which these texts urge upon us; and to conclude, by stating a few facts, and bringing before you a few considerations, to engage your liberality in behalf of the offering of this day.

I. In explaining the duty of loving our neighbour, I begin by observing, that it is a duty very obviously arising out of our rational and social natures. Could we for a moment suppose one man to be the inhabitant of the earth, and sole possessor and monarch of all, it is evident that the whole of his duty would consist in devotion to his God and in attending to himself; in other words, to love God and to love himself would be the catalogue of his duties. But very different from this is and has always been the state of man. Social duties, at least domestic duties, are coeval nearly with the formation of man; and only for a short time did conjugal duties comprise the whole of the second table of the law.

It has been truly said, “Man is born in society, and in it he remains. The love of it is deeply and powerfully implanted in the human constitution. The wailings of the infant, and the pensiveness of the adult when alone—the lively joy of the one, and the cheerfulness of the other in the return to society, are proofs how congenial the social principle is to human nature. The print of the Laplander on the snowy shore gives joy to the lonely mariner; and the mute signs of cordiality and of friendly feeling awaken the memory of *pleasures he felt in society.*”*

The divine law, my friends, as delivered

by Moses, and afterwards delineated and expounded by the prophets and by the Son of God, proceeds on the principle that man is to find his appropriate duties and comforts, his trials and his solaces, his opportunities of doing and of receiving good chiefly in society.

At an early period, indeed, we read of a melancholy occurrence in the history of our species—a frightful breach of the law of love among brethren in the murder of Abel. This sad proof of the existence and the virulence of moral evil in our world has given occasion to a most impressive announcement of the divine will, and of our duty in reference to the second table in the searching and appalling question to Cain, “Where is Abel thy brother?” and in the evasive and unsatisfactory answer, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” which, instead of being sustained, was the prelude to the sentence of outlawry pronounced on the unhappy culprit. We have the divine will expressed that man is to care for man—that *he* is our neighbour whom we can benefit—that the individual is not to be found whom we have a right to injure, (a right to injure or maltreat is next to a contradiction in terms,) or even to neglect when *he needs and we can afford relief.*

There are, unquestionably, certain portions of the human family with whom we are more immediately connected, and whom we are bound more directly to assist and relieve. These are those of our own house and kindred—to neglect whom is a virtual denial of humanity, and to be worse than the infidel. Yet not to kindred and immediate relatives is our kindness to be confined; if so, we do nothing beyond what the publican did. To neglect kind offices to our own kindred and near relatives, is to sink low, indeed, in the scale of humanity, or rather to be divested of it wholly. But to love our neighbour,

* Ferguson’s History of Civil Society.

according to the true relative description of it, is to begin with and to go beyond this circle; and without regard to difference of rank, or language, or religion, or sect, or party, "to do good as we have the opportunity." Our blessed Saviour beautifully and strikingly illustrates this in the admired parable of the good Samaritan, the force of which parable plainly lies in this, that a Samaritan relieves a Jew; showing us that no difference of tribe, or nation, or opinion, religious or political, should for a moment prevent one who has the means from putting forth the hand, or opening the purse, or bearing reproach from the narrow-hearted in affording relief; that every distressed individual with whom we come in contact, or who is any way brought within the circle of our influence, is to be a sharer in our kindness, which is to be limited only by *their wants and by our ability*.

What, then, is the meaning of the words "*as thyself?*" This surely goes upon the idea that we are to love ourselves, for this seems to be made in some sense the rule, and directory of our love to others. The apostle Paul, it is true, in describing the features of character in the perilous times, (2 Tim. iii.) begins with this, "Men shall be lovers of their own selves;" but then it immediately follows, "covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholly, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof:" showing plainly the nature and characteristic of that self-love which is sinful. It is *selfishness* which is the perversion of what is originally right and commendable, namely, that we love ourselves rationally and religiously. And how, then, should our self-love manifest itself? In reference to the body, by attending to its preservation, its health, and its comfort; in regard to the intellectual part, the spirit in man, by improving and directing to right objects the powers and faculties bestowed on us; in reference to both the body and the soul, as formed for glorifying God, by seeking earnestly the grace by which alone we can be created again in Christ Jesus, and formed to show forth his praise. In one word, if we love ourselves wisely, and according to the design of our creation and the method of our redemption, we will most

assuredly choose the better part, and glorify God; for we cannot *truly love ourselves*, unless in so far as we comply in the first instance with the great commandment. Well, then, if we thus learn to love ourselves in a reasonable and christian manner, we shall know at the same time how we are to love our neighbour. It must be just in a similar way, by studying to promote next to our own, *his safety*, health, improvement and salvation. True, indeed, religion is first of all a personal concern, and no one can enter into the secrets of his neighbour's heart, and probe the disease of sin in his neighbour, or even in his most near relation, as in his own case; but there must be in all cases a sincere desire and aim to promote, instead of hindering in any way the spiritual and eternal good of fellow-men, especially of those who are more directly within the sphere of our example or influence, and who, unless benefited, would be the worse of our example. It would be strange, indeed, if, while we are bound *not* to injure our neighbour's property, or health, or good name, but to promote their good, we should be absolved from all such obligations just when the matter in question became most important and consequential.

The only question which can here be put, refers to the extent of this obligation—I mean as to the persons to be considered as *neighbours*. It is plain that neighbour is the term employed, that our benevolence may have precise aim; and that, instead of spending itself in sentimental feelings and in empty generalities, it may be *actively* and *usefully* directed. But, in reality, *he* is our neighbour, to be assisted and relieved, whose claims are ascertained, and to whom we have the means of doing good. The prayer our Lord taught his disciples, and which we have just been uttering, shows us how we are to interpret the extent of the duty of brotherly love, when we say, "*Our Father, hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,*" we are bound in consistency to follow our requests, by assisting in advancing the knowledge and the influence of the only true religion wherever an opening is presented. The man of Macedonia appeared in vision to the Apostle, crying "*Come over and help us.*" And, my brethren, to instance from the case before us, the men of Canada and of Nova Scotia are just now calling on us to give them help. They are in fact saying, "*We are your brethren, who have left our native*

land in quest of sustenance and habitation; we have found no provision as in the land of our fathers for the ordinances of religion; we are far, far, from the means of grace; we have no minister to care for us, to instruct us weekly in the sanctuary, and to dispense to us the precious bread of life. Alas! we have not had our children baptized, except by our tears; we are very willing to give of our hard-earned wages to procure such a blessing; but unless helped from our native land, we cannot raise nearly enough to rear the Church and to support the pastor among us; but we shall do what we can; do ye kindly and generously assist us, and we shall not cease to pray that God Almighty may bless you and reward you liberally." Now, my dear friends, this brings the matter near enough to us, especially as a society is actually engaged in providing the needful aid; so that though the ocean is between us and the objects of this day's contributions, still they are our neighbours, as their claims are brought directly towards us, as we cannot pretend ignorance of their state, and as we have in our hands the means of administering to their relief. But this brings us to the

II. Thing proposed—the obligations under which we are laid to the practice of the duty. Now, I acknowledge, my friends, that I have in some degree anticipated, as by the statement of the duty and the grounds of it, its obligation is evinced. Yet let us farther commend the duty of loving our neighbour,

1st. From the connexion of this commandment with the first. It is like it in importance. It is like it in its powerful and extensive influence. It is, in fact, a stream flowing from the same source; for, when we love our God and Saviour unseen, we will most certainly love our brethren and the children of the same father whom we have seen. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." This is the love of God that we keep his commandment; and this is his commandment that we love one another, as he hath loved us. Every one, therefore, who owns the obligation to love God, must at the same time acknowledge and feel the obligation to love his neighbour, since this is the will of God; and the same Holy Spirit, by whose influence the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, inspires the same grace of charity; for "we are taught of God," says the Apostle, "to love one another."

2d. A sense of justice, the golden rule, should lead us to do good to our neighbour. Where is the person who does not expect and desire relief when in distress? Where is the Jew who would not have accused a Samaritan of hard-heartedness had he passed him by when he was lying in his blood? Where is the individual who in distress and poverty does not look for aid from the neighbour who is able to afford some adequate relief? And why should we not do that for others which we most certainly would wish others to do for us in similar circumstances? And to apply this to the case now in hand. Were you in the circumstances of our expatriated countrymen, destitute of the means of religious instruction, having neither schools, nor churches, nor ministers, would you not expect to be remembered by friends at home? Would you not hope that they would send forth from their abundance the preachers of salvation, and the catechists who might instruct and comfort you and your children? Why then will you not do that which you would have expected had you been in their case?

But, in the 3d place, the greatest difficulty to contend with is the more powerful influence of other motives addressed to the selfishness of the heart; and the idea so strongly present with most men, that, when they give to charitable purposes, there is so much taken from self. It is not because there is no benevolence in man, or even because kind feeling is, absolutely viewed, weak and impotent, that the claims of poverty or of spiritual want are not attended to, but it is because there is some *other principle* or *passion more powerful*, which has the predominating influence, so that, the weight in the opposite scale being more powerful, selfishness prevails. It might counteract the selfish propensities of human nature, could men consider that other modes and occasions of giving away money, for example, for rich clothing, or sumptuous fare, should be considered as more an interference with self-love than the cost of alms or religious donations, as expending more in a month than the other in a whole year. Yet when money goes for religion and charity, it is absurdly thought to be lost to self, and sunk in the deep; while what is spent on superfluities, for the gratification of appetite, or for display, is thought to be unquestionably well bestowed. This is entirely a mistake. You must keep your books on another plan. You must learn another kind of

arithmetic. Place what you spend more than is needful on your gratification of appetite or fancy to the side of loss, as really gone irrecoverably; but what you lay out in doing good, corporeally or spiritually, put to the side of gain to yourself and to others; for what you give judiciously and cheerfully is not lost or thrown away, but in reality laid out most advantageously, as to present satisfaction and after-reflection. Be persuaded that relieving men's miseries, both temporal and spiritual, does not interfere with self-interest or self-love properly explained, but is just another and a better form of it; that, if the object be true satisfaction and real enjoyment, the way to it is not selfish and miserly withholding, but generous and considerate giving, as cases are properly authenticated. O! if you could only be brought to try the experiment, or rather to acquire the principle and the taste, you would all agree that your life consisteth not in the abundance you possess, but in the wise and liberal application of your talents, (and this of money is one of them,) so as most to advance the glory of God, your own and your neighbour's good. It is one of the most remarkable sayings of our blessed Lord, whose whole life was benevolence, feeling, and acting, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

4th. What is heaven, after the attainment of which you profess to aspire, but the region of perfect love? And by whom is it inhabited but by the merciful as well as the pure in heart—by those whose faith wrought by love—by those who resemble their Father in heaven, who makes his sun to shine, and his rain to fall on the evil and on the good—by those who give, asking nothing again, whom men cannot recompense, but who shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just? You have visited the Saviour in sickness and poverty; you have followed out his great design of mercy in saving sinners, in compassionating and reclaiming the ignorant and the erring; you have like him been workers together with God; and he will say to you in the great day, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Be animated by this consideration, in connexion with the ultimate object of hope, that you are called to this end—not to gain reputation, learning, and wealth, but to do good—not directly and immediately to gain heaven itself and immortal life, but to ascend to heaven in

a course of usefulness, and in resembling Him who is love itself. While, therefore, you lawfully seek reputation, property, learning, eloquence, or blessings and advantages of any kind, resolve to seek them only in subordination to the great purpose of glorifying God and benefiting men, as means merely to an end; and pray for grace, wisdom, and strength, from the fountain of all mercy, that you may be moulded into the image, and follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ, and ultimately obtain an abundant entrance into the heavenly kingdom—the blessed confluence of perfected spirits and glorified bodies—the region of light and love. Oh! then, while most professing Christians are comparatively low and grovelling in their course, and while worldly men riot, and dig, and climb during their short passing day, and then vanish and are seen no more, ("he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish;" and where, Oh! where shall he next be found?) do ye, beloved friends, who know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who sit at his table, and are looking for his mercy unto eternal life, walk in love, as he loved you, and gave himself for you. "Be not too sparing in your sowing: be not weary in well-doing; for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not." "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days."

III. In improving and applying the subject, let me again hold some reasoning with that selfish and contracted spirit which hinders such good works as that for which we would this day desire your ready and liberal co-operation. To all we have said selfishness replies, "I must mind myself." If I give in the way recommended, and that not to one thing or to two objects at some distance of time, but every now and then, I may come to have nothing to myself: really these collections come too often; we have had one for the Highlands, another for India, and now one for America this season; if we were to give to them all, besides helping the poor, we should certainly be—what?—reduced to poverty. No! my numerous friends, you need not be afraid; you have given very little as yet: very small, indeed, is the diminution of your heap by what you have given to religious charity. There is, indeed, no instance of a person being crippled in his means, far less ruined in his circumstances, by liberal giving. Many are ruined by extravagance in living

and in dress, by intemperance in eating and drinking, and smoking, but none by liberality to the needy. The reasons are obvious. A religious and benevolent person will be characterized at the same time by moderation in all things, by caution, self-denial, watchfulness and sobriety, which are all favourable to the circumstances. The same principle, and the same motives and habits which lead to do good to our neighbours, are highly and directly conducive to a safe, frugal and beneficial course of living and acting. The man who lends to the Lord, by dealing out to the needy, whether the case he considers be that of the body or of the soul, is one who can give the best account of all he expends. Another reason why there is no loss, but great gain by christian liberality is, the rich blessing of God, which makes even a little better than the great substance of the wicked; nay, which oftentimes remarkably succeeds the enterprizes and the plans of those who devise liberal things for Christ and his people. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth: while there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth only to penury." Remember, at all events, that yourselves and your substance, be it less or more, is not your own, but the Lord's; and that from the great rule of "doing all to the glory of God," there is no exception or exemption. The sum, therefore, comes to this. The first and the second table form one whole: and the only real, constant, and ever-living principle and motive of well-doing is, the love of Christ which constraineth to reason and judge in this manner: "One died for all, and all are dead; and he died for all that we might not live to ourselves, but to Him who died for us and rose again."

Brethren, it is especially in behalf of certain inhabitants of the British colonies of North America we this day plead. We have already given you a short and a genuine account of their case. They have gone out to better their circumstances, and many of them do succeed; but they have for years after going out, to combat with many difficulties, to procure their *log-house*, to bring in their *lot* of land, to feed and clothe their families. They are widely scattered, and have no such numbers in proximity to each other, possessed of the means and the strong inclination to provide the means of stated religious instruction. Many of them have lived many years without hearing the Word of God. No church-going-bell salutes

their ears; no *Scottish Sabbath* smiles upon them; no tribes going up to the house of God in company; their harps are on the willows, or are lying unstrung: alas! for the songs of Zion in the foreign land! But their case is not in one respect like the captive Jews, for they are free, and their case is remediable. Encouraged by the prospects held out to them from this land of their fathers, that aid will be afforded them when they make a beginning for themselves, they are anxious to avail themselves of the opportunity. They and we together may hope to make out what either *None* might despair of attaining. Be induced, my dear friends, to give their case an honest and christian consideration as set forth in convincing facts, not by vague representation, in the reports and circulars of the Glasgow Colonial Society. (Here several of their statements were read.) This comes very near us, seeing our petitioners are from our own country, neighbourhood, *parish*. We were lately called to follow with our prayers across the Atlantic several families who have left us for the American woods, and we refused not to pray for their safety and success; and will you not follow them also with the assistance of a part of your substance, that they may obtain that which is the object of all prayers—the blessings of salvation, which come by faith, and that faith by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, and that by preachers; but how, unless they be sent? When we come up to the house of God in company, and enjoy our Sabbaths, our sacraments, our Sabbath schools and week-day schools, will you not think with sympathy of those of your kindred who have no church to go to; no pastors, no teachers; whose desire and prayer now is, that you would help them to obtain these most important blessings, without which the other accommodation they may obtain will only profit for a little; for the soul will be lost without instruction, and then what will all else profit? Yes! my friends, they do in this way earnestly crave your help; but if not heard, the cry will, it may be, become fainter and fainter, not because they have ceased to need, but because they have ceased to feel their spiritual necessities; not because they have obtained supply, but because spiritual apathy and spiritual death have been the consequence of their not having found the suitable provision. Heathenism in all its guilt and misery shall have been re-introduced, in

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consequence of the withholding the light of divine truth, and the keeping back of the supply of the heavenly provision. And now that the case is known, and the means of sending aid made obvious and direct, so that every one of us may do a little, and the whole brought together promising to prove effectual, let none of us, my dear friends, deny himself the high privileges of contributing to such a cause; let none of us take counsel with a Cain who said, "Am

I my brother's keeper?" or with a Judas who said, "Why was this ointment not sold and given to the poor?" But hear the texts which speak to you this day and every day. "Thou shalt not bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "Thou shalt not hide thyself from thine own flesh." The second commandment is like to the first, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

THE FIRST AND SECOND PETITIONS;

FROM A LECTURE ON OUR LORD'S PRAYER,

By the Very Rev. G. H. BAIRD, D.D.,

Senior Minister of the High Church, Edinburgh, and Principal of the University.

"*Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.*"—LUKE xi. 2.

FIRST PETITION.

THE first of these petitions is expressed in the words "Hallowed be thy name." It is important that you affix distinct ideas to what is implied in this petition, as in that case only it can be wisely and properly presented to the Almighty. I say, then, that to hallow a thing, signifies in the Scriptures generally to set it apart as holy, or rather to conceive of it under those solemn impressions of respect and reverence which objects of religion are fitted to inspire. In this sense the priests, under the Levitical law, and the Levites, employed in the service of the temple, were *hallowed*—that is, were regarded as holy, for the purpose to which they were applied in exciting in the minds of the people feelings and sentiments of solemnity and reverence. Now, in the same sense it becomes us to *hallow* the name of God, and to pray that the whole human race entertain the sentiments due to the greatness and glory of his nature. The *name* of God, again, "hallowed be thy name," is a phrase which occurs frequently in the Scriptures, and it has some diversity of signification in consequence of a diversity of the circumstances with which it is connected. Sometimes the *name* of God signifies God himself. Now, if God is essentially and unchangeably holy, we cannot pray with propriety that he may be hallowed, set apart as holy. But more commonly the phrase signifies the conception we form of the divine nature and attributes. Thus when the Psalmist says, "In Judah is God known;

his name is great in Israel," the meaning is, that in Judah just conceptions were formed of God, and these conceptions were accompanied with reverence in the minds of the people. Thus, too, when Solomon says, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous ruineth into it and is safe," the meaning is, that just conceptions of God are a powerful security to good men in every hour of alarm and trial. And in this sense we may with great propriety pray that the name of God may be hallowed; and the meaning of the petition, taking this to be the meaning of the terms, will be, "O God impress upon our minds, and upon the minds of all mankind, a just sense of thy nature and thy glory. May we conceive of thee as thou art, pure, and perfect, and righteous, and may our conceptions produce within us those sentiments of respect and awe which become us in thy presence." Observe then, my brethren, that the first petition in all prayers, therefore, is the solemn request that genuine principles of religion may prevail in our own consciences and hearts, and in the consciences and hearts of all our brethren. It is a request that God may be every-where known, and adored, and served, and that the knowledge, and worship, and service of him may every-where produce those devout and holy feelings which they are naturally fitted to inspire. Now, it will be obvious, I think, that this request is with very great propriety placed at the commencement of the form

of prayer prescribed by our Lord; for it solicits a frame of mind suitable to the service in which we are then engaged, and it calls up before us a general view of what ought to be the first and great ob-

ject of all our pious desires and exertions; for the glory of God is the ultimate end of our creation, in accordance with which are all the following petitions of this prayer.

SECOND PETITION.

The blessings we pray for are either fruits which grow naturally out of true notions of God, or the means by which these notions may be formed. In particular, of this description is the second petition, "Thy kingdom come." In illustrating the import of this petition, I have to state, that the *kingdom* of God is a phrase which has also different acceptations in Scripture. In virtue of his character of Creator and Preserver, he is universal Lord, and has a just title to dispose of all things according to his pleasure. All things are produced and upheld and governed by him. All things are subject to his law, and they still continue to fulfil his appointment. In this sense the kingdom of God has been of old and from everlasting. It still continues to exist in perfection, and, therefore, we have no occasion to pray that in this sense of the term the kingdom of God may come. But, then, besides this natural dominion which God exercises perpetually over all created things, the Scriptures have revealed to us a spiritual kingdom of grace, which had been gradually introduced by God for subjecting the minds of men to the obedience of his law. This is the moral kingdom; and the moral kingdom has appeared under various forms of the divine administration; for its laws were promulgated to the first race of mankind by the voice of conscience and by signs from heaven; it was exhibited to them in a manner still more formal in the prescriptions and ceremonial forms of the Mosaic dispensation; but it appeared in full perfection under the great government of that great King whom God hath anointed and set on his holy hill of Sion. Hence, observe, in the New Testament it is the Gospel dispensation which is most commonly denominated the kingdom of God. This is that kingdom which the prophet foretold the God of heaven should set up in the latter days, which should never be destroyed, and which should reach from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. When, indeed, our Saviour taught this prayer to his disciples, the kingdom of God to be administered by him was only in commencement, Jesus himself laying the foundation of its future spread.

Now, therefore, was the time to pray, the moment when Christ prescribed it was the time to pray with earnestness that it might come, that the minds of men might be prepared for receiving it. But still there is the same occasion in these latter days for a repetition of the prayer; for though this kingdom of God, the Gospel dispensation came at first with demonstration of the Spirit and with power; and though it spread for a period with rapid pace over the nations, yet it is far, very far, from having reached its appointed limits, and for many ages its progress seems in many instances to have been arrested, and still by far the greater part of the earth is a stranger to its light and influence; and, alas! where it has been received, its laws have been evaded by many, nay, by all, who say, "Lord, Lord," and neglect to do the things commanded, and proclaim by the disobedience of their lives that they will not have him to rule over them. In this state, my pious brethren, you will feel a powerful call to pray that the kingdom of God may come—that the heathen may be made the inheritance of Christ, and the uttermost parts of the Mahometan world his possession—that the Jews, from whom the kingdom of God has been so long removed, may be grafted again into the tree of life, and that all who call themselves Christians may lay aside their errors and corruptions, and hold the unity of the faith in the bond of peace.

Such, then, is the import of the second petition. It is an earnest request to God, that, under the influence of his providence, all the kingdoms of the earth may become the kingdom of God and of his Christ—that superstition, and error, and infidelity, may fall before the touchstone of the Gospel of peace, and that the people may know the Lord from the greatest even unto the least. Thus, and thus alone, can the sacred authority of the Almighty be re-established in the hearts of his once deluded offspring; and thus, and thus alone, can the period arrive when he shall reign over a willing and obedient people in that kingdom of glory which yet remains to be revealed.

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SATURDAY, 14TH

No. 116.

LECTURE by the Rev. JOHN LEE, D.D.,

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN M'DONALD, Fairntosh.

ADDRESS by the Rev. ALEXANDER THOMSON, Aberdeen.

Price 1

A LECTURE,

FROM 2D CORINTHIANS v. 11-17.

By the Rev. JOHN LEE, D.D.,

Minister of Lady Yester's Church, Edinburgh, and Clerk to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

THE previous part of this chapter brings solemnly into view the prospects of man as a responsible being. The hope of the Apostle was fixed on eternity; but well did he know that every one could not look forward to eternity with the tranquil joy which he experienced in thinking of the hour of his departure. We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; and when we shall appear, there to render an account, we shall receive every one the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. They who have done good, (and none can do good, no, not one, without having his heart purified by faith, and his capacities moved and strengthened by the grace of the Spirit,) shall receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away; and they who have done evil, through the influence of a deceitful and desperately wicked heart, shall receive the fearful sentence of condemnation. To all men it is a serious thing to contemplate the solemnity of the last judgment; but to the wicked, who are conscious of having departed habitually from the ways of purity and peace, the anticipation is peculiarly awful. This consideration should produce a powerful effect on those who are intrusted with the ministry of the Word. Both on their own account, and on account of those who are committed to their charge, it deeply concerns them to ponder the final result of their labours. Wretched will be their condition if they shall prove unfaithful in the trust committed to them. But even though they may not shun to declare the whole counsel of God—though they may seek diligently by all means to draw men into the way of life, they know that there are hearts so hard, and wills so depraved, that they are more disposed to depart from the Savicur than to come to him. In thinking of

the horrors of that condemnation which will overtake the impenitent, they cannot be unmoved; and the more they think of it, the more will their zeal be quickened. "Knowing the terror of the Lord," says the Apostle, "we persuade men"—that is to say, we use all practicable means of urging on them the motives to repentance. The meaning of the words may possibly be sometimes misunderstood. It may be alleged that the Apostle here suggests that the most efficacious manner of dealing with sinners is to lay before them the terrors of the Lord in all their dire severity. But this is not the meaning. It is, indeed, necessary to deal faithfully with every transgressor, setting before him both death and life, assuring him that God is holy and just—that he will not pardon unrepented guilt, or pass by indulged and cherished transgressions. But though these truths must be faithfully published, the Scriptures do not ascribe so much power to the denunciations of vengeance as to the attractions of mercy. By this consideration especially is the sinner induced to forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and to turn unto the Lord—namely, that with the Lord there is mercy, and that he will abundantly pardon. But, while the commissioned ambassadors of Christ beseech men in God's stead to be reconciled, they who thus labour and watch for the souls of others are impelled, not merely by the desire and hope of success, but by the recollection of the terrors of the Lord, to engage in this task of persuading men, applying every tender and alluring assiduity to overcome the repugnance of the unrenewed heart against the good ways of the Lord. It is only in a day of power, when the Spirit is poured out from on high, that the dry bones can be made to live, and the heart, hard

as the flinty rock or the nether millstone, can be turned into a fountain of water. But the motives presented in the Word of God must be faithfully applied, and it is by the instrumentality of such motives that the work of the Lord is in ordinary cases forwarded and completed. All those whose hearts are intent on the objects, while they omit none of the appointed means, will look to God alone for the success of their efforts; and, while they depend on his almighty aid, and leave to him the issue of their earnest and well-directed diligence, they have the satisfaction of knowing that they are *made manifest unto God*. To him their purposes, their zeal, and their industry, are known. However men may deride and deprecate their services, their witness is in heaven and their record in the sky. While they go forth to the field, bearing the precious seed, whether they sow in hope or in tears, their labour may fail, because God in his sovereignty does not give the increase; but he will say to every such labourer, Well done good and faithful servant, it is well that it was in thine heart; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

In the conclusion of the 11th verse, the Apostle congratulates himself, because he and his associates, while they were made manifest to God and enjoyed his favour, had also cause to believe that they were made manifest in the consciences of the people among whom they had ministered. This testimony of approbation they could not calculate on possessing, unless their labours had been blessed to the conversion and establishment of the souls of those who formed so just an estimate of their services. Those who continued hardened and careless, must have attached little value to the pains bestowed on their spiritual improvement; but those who had received the word with all readiness of mind, and had made progress in the christian life, would not fail to acknowledge with cordial gratitude the most inestimable benefits of which they had been made the sharers; and in proportion as their teachers, by commanding Christ and glorying in his cross, had commended themselves to every enlightened man's conscience in the sight of God, the more would every enlightened and purified conscience render to them the honour which was due to their fidelity. The praise of man was not, indeed, the recompence which any of the true followers of Christ ever sought or ever prized any farther than as they found it to be their duty to please their neighbour for his good to edification. And, least of all, did ever any true servant of Christ submit to the meanness of gaining human applause

by any sacrifice of his own conviction. The Apostle says, therefore, in the 12th verse, "For we command not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart."

The Apostle had been charged with self-commendation, because he had found it necessary to vindicate himself from charges which affected, not only his private reputation, but the honour of the christian name. He had, indeed, magnified his office, but he had never aimed at exalting himself from the moment when he had learned to "count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord." Yet he could not honestly refrain from giving the people whom he loved in his heart occasion to glory in his behalf, that they might have somewhat to answer them who gloried in appearance, and not in heart. Having the gift of discerning spirits, he well knew that some of those teachers who vainly boasted of their success and of their incorruptible integrity were only hollow pretenders to a character which did not belong to them; and who, when they vilified Paul and his faithful coadjutors, at one time pronouncing them mad, and at other times commiserating their want of confidence, and the tameness of their inartificial speech, and the meanness of their unimposing bodily presence, were inwardly conscious that they were the vehicles of calumnious accusations.

The Apostle in the 13th verse alludes to the contradicting and inconsistent accusations which were levelled against him, and modestly, yet firmly, repels them: "For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause." It seems to have been alleged by some, that it was from some aberration of mind that the Apostles were so regardless of their temporal consorts, and so ready to expose themselves to every extremity of danger; and, if on any occasion when they were persecuted in one city, they fled to another, this was probably ascribed to pusillanimity and coldness of heart. But Paul assures the Corinthians, that when he proved by his conduct that he counted not his life dear to him, or that he had not formed his conduct on the narrow views of worldly prudence, but was willing to be accounted a fool for glorying in a crucified Redeemer, and in persecutions, reproaches, and worldly losses, it was for the sake of God, who had chosen the weak things of the world, and things which were despised to confound the things which in the world's false estimate were mighty; and when, on the other hand,

he acted a more cautious part, keeping aloof from danger when he could do so with a good conscience, it was that he might have the prospect of enjoying a longer term of usefulness among those whom he loved as his own soul. Though men might pretend to find it difficult to reconcile his practice with his professions, he was equally animated with zeal for God, and love to men; whether he seemed to be chilled by extreme circumspection, or exalted above measure by the multitude of revelations, and transported with unnatural ecstasy, and glorying as a fool in suffering shame for his Master's cause, one grand motive habitually predominated in his mind, and cast out all meaner and more earthly principles: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

The great motive to every christian exercise is the love of Christ. This expression may signify either the love which Christ bears to his people, or the love which his people cherish towards him. These corresponding affections are so closely connected that one cannot exist without the other. It will readily be admitted by all who are capable of reflecting on the subject, that none can with truth pretend that they love Christ, except they who have previously been the objects of his love. We love him because he first loved us. On the other hand, it is abundantly manifest that whosoever is an object of the love of Christ, will be drawn to him in that close communion of souls which is constituted by the exercise of a lively faith. Among the evidences that we have an interest in the love and kindness of God our Saviour, none is more powerful than the experience which the believing soul has of joy and peace in believing, and the alacrity and readiness of mind with which obedience is yielded to all the will of God. It is the office of the Spirit to shed abroad the love of God in the hearts of his people; and wherever this love prevails, it exercises a constraining efficacy which casts out every inclination to resist the operation of grace in the heart. Some interpret the expression, *constraineth us*, in the passage before us, as signifying that the love of Christ impelled the Apostles to brave persecution and death, while they were engaged in preaching the Gospel. But this appears to be too contracted a view of the meaning. This love is, indeed, stronger than the fear of death or any mere natural feeling. It raises the soul above

the world, and leads men to endure, as seeing him who is invisible. It leads them also to act as feeling the power of a divine life, and as having the assurance that God worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure. This hallowed sentiment prevails over every other principle, so that its force, when compared with that of all inferior motives, may be declared to be irresistible. The judgments which are formed under this influence are of the most refined and purifying character.

"We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." Christ died for all who shall ever be saved. His death was a sacrifice sufficient in value to procure the salvation of the whole world. But in strict propriety of speech he cannot be said to have died for any except those who shall eternally partake of the benefits of his death; otherwise we must be compelled to admit that for soine he has died in vain. He said himself, "If I be lifted up from the earth I will draw all men unto me." But he also said to many, "Ye will not come to me that ye may have life;" and on another occasion, "No man cometh unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him." The *all*, therefore, who were to be drawn to Christ, were not the whole world of sinners; but all who were ever to be brought to the glory of heaven would be drawn by the power of the cross, destroying in their souls the love of sin, and awakening the love of Christ.

But what is meant by the expression, If one died for all, then were all dead? It may mean that all for whom Christ died, and whom he quickened to a new life, had been dead in trespasses and sins, and could not have been revived but by this divinely appointed method. In other words, as Christ died to take away sin and to secure justification of life for his people, they for whom he thus died must have been in a state of condemnation or alienation from the life of God. But the words are susceptible of another signification which seems to be more appropriate. Inasmuch as Christ died for all who shall have everlasting life, they for whom he died may be regarded as having been all dead in the eye of the divine law when he suffered for them. They were so interested in him that when he, their representative and federal head, died in their stead, they could only be viewed in the same light as if they had personally fulfilled all righteousness and endured the penalty due for their past guilt. Thus they were absolved from punishment, because he who came in the name of the Lord to save them suffered for them, the

just for the unjust, that he might bring them unto God.

But a farther view of the benefits of Christ's death is presented in the 15th verse. He died not only that believers might be justified through his blood, but that they might be sanctified and strengthened for his service. "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." They who have been included in the number of Christ's chosen are regenerated to a new life, and are made partakers not only of the hope but of the actual reception of the gift of eternal life. Living by faith in their Redeemer, they no longer consider themselves as their own, but as being bought with a price. Therefore they live not to themselves or to the gratification of their natural dispositions and the depraved habits of the men of the world among whom they had their conversation in time past, but they yield themselves to God as those who are alive from the death of sin, and they live to the honour and for the service of Him who died for them and rose again. As he died for them, they feel a most powerful obligation to die to sin—to mortify all evil inclinations, and they are enabled, by the power of his resurrection confirming their faith and animating their obedience, to rise above the vanities and follies of the world, and to have their conversation in the heavens, whence they look for the Saviour to come again, and to raise their corruptible bodies, (which he has ransomed from the power of the grave,) that with their glorified spirits they may exist in a state of undivided and eternal union with him in the kingdom of the Father.

And this idea appears to be implied in Christ's dying for all that all should live to him. There is here, I think, a reference to the distinction which the Jews wished still to maintain between themselves and the Gentiles. Addressed as these words were to the Greeks, we may regard them as intimating very significantly and emphatically that the privileges of the Gospel were as freely communicated to them as to the descendants of Jacob. In the epistles of Paul, there are many declarations to this purpose. "The Gospel" is said to be "the power of God unto salvation to all, or to every one that believeth;" and to show what is meant by this comprehensive description, it is added, "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Not less plainly is the same distinction kept in view, when it is said, "The righteousness of God without the law is manifested, even the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon

all them that believe; for there is no difference," that is, God has put no difference between Jews and Gentiles whose hearts are purified by faith. Again, in the 10th chapter of the Romans, where the state of Jews and Gentiles in New Testament times is so fully discussed, it is said, "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto *all* that call upon him." And once more, "So have these (the Jews) also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them *all* in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon *all*." Christ, then, in this sense, died for *all*; for sinners of the Gentiles brought nigh by faith, and for the children of Abraham who, like their progenitor, believe in God, and it is counted to them for righteousness. As many as received the Saviour by faith, to them gave he power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

This view of the words may assist us in more clearly apprehending the meaning of the 16th verse, "Wherefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." The time has been when, as Jews, the Apostles regarded it as a high distinction to have been children of Abraham according to the flesh, and, therefore, gloried in the advantage attached to the name of Jew; and even after we became Christians, we could not cease to think it a privilege to have been allied by blood to those fathers of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came. But now we feel it to be our duty to proclaim that "Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but faith which worketh by love." Though we may have even thought it a matter of glorying that Christ was our kinsman after the flesh, we perceive that this is an honour which is of very subordinate value when compared with the privilege of being all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. By faith which levels all distinctions both personal and national, we gladly recognise in you, Coriathians, and in the most blinded of the heathen who now see a great light, not strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God. We regard you as new creatures; and well do we know that it is only as new creatures regenerated by the Spirit and sanctified through the truth, that we ourselves or any of the children of Adam can be accepted in the be-

loved. We are not certainly taught by the Gospel that natural affections ought not to be cherished, and that there is no sacredness or force in the ties of blood and friendship. But Christianity purifies, ennobles and hallows the principles which unite us one to another. Believers are the children of the same Father, the friends and the brethren of the same Lord. They recognise one another not merely as of the same lineage or the same country, but as being all one in Christ Jesus, through faith in the living Head of all spiritual influences. They are enabled to abound in all the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and thus to give proof of their divine original. They know one another not after the flesh, but as walk-

ing after the Spirit, and as having their conversation in heaven. And the Lord their Redeemer acknowledges them to be his, when they give evidence of the reality of their friendship by keeping his commandments. There is one human name which all generations have called blessed; and it is not a matter of wonder that, in superstitious ages, an undue degree of homage has been paid to the mother of the Lord. But the Lord himself said, "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?" And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples and said, Behold my mother and my brethren. "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

CHRIST THE DOOR OF HIS CHURCH;

A SERMON PREACHED IN BEHALF OF THE ABERDEEN ANTI-PATRONAGE SOCIETY,
UNION CHAPEL, ABERDEEN, 7TH APRIL, 1831.

By the Rev. JOHN M'DONALD,

Of Fairntosh.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep."—JOHN x. 7.

WHEN Jesus said these words, he addressed them not only to his disciples, but to the multitude: "Verily, verily, I am the door of the sheep." The doctrine contained in these words, though couched in figurative language, appears to involve obvious and interesting views. Jesus directed the attention of his hearers to the importance of the proposition regarding himself, because he was aware that many of them, and indeed those generally to whom he spoke, were inattentive to the importance of the doctrines, and but too apt to rest satisfied with the parable, while they remained wholly unacquainted with its import, spirit, and design; hence their blindness as to the mysteries of his kingdom. It appears that the words, "I am the door," convey a view of a doctrine which lies at the foundation of all our hopes and prospects in eternity, and without an acquaintance with which doctrine, and an interest in it, poor sinners must for ever be excluded from the kingdom of God. Surely, then, it becomes God's children frequently to meditate on the doctrine contained in these words, and to put forth the actings of faith on it, so that it never be lost sight of. The more we study this doctrine, the more will we experience the benefit of entering in through the door, Christ: as he says himself, "I am the door; by me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

The words just read contain a simple

proposition. I shall content myself, this evening, with offering a few considerations in illustration of it, and of the doctrine contained in it—trusting that you will then perceive the bearing which it has on the particular object of this evening's meeting.

When Christ tells his followers, and thus announces to the whole world that he is the door of the sheep, he announces to one and all of us that a door has been opened which had been shut up—the door which was locked up and barred by the fall, has been opened up again. I trust I am now addressing a congregation who are aware that man, by the fall, forfeited all right and title to life, and that God excluded him from Paradise. The history is expressive of man's exclusion from the life of God. It was thus ever after impossible for him to find an entrance to the favour of God, by any efforts of his own; as man could never be justified by the deeds of the law, for through the law is the knowledge of sin, hence an entrance into life was for ever shut against man; and every individual of the human race would have for ever perished, unless Jesus Christ had come into the world and opened up a way through which sinners might enter into life. He removed all the obstacles which stood in the way, and met all the requirements of the law. He was made a curse, and thereby redeemed man from the curse of the law. Inasmuch as he was the Second Per-

son of the glorious Trinity, he magnified the law and made it honourable, by bringing in an everlasting righteousness. He wrought out the redemption of sinners by a righteousness meritorious, to procure the blessings of salvation to believers. Now Jesus Christ, having thus opened up the way, represents himself as the door, and elsewhere he represents himself as the way: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." We read also of a new way of access having been opened up and consecrated by the blood of Christ. So with regard to the words, "I am the door," I would observe, though, perhaps, I may not be able to express myself in language which will be generally intelligible, that the impression on my mind is, that it is not the work accomplished, but the person who accomplishes it, and the salvation as connected with this person that are to be regarded. For neither the law nor justice could have looked on sinners in mercy, except in connexion with the person who wrought out their salvation. I mentioned, therefore, that Christ opened up an avenue that had been shut up against man, by the removal of all the obstacles that stood in the way.

In the second place, I farther understand Jesus Christ to be the way, with respect to access to God by sinful human creatures. I need scarcely expatiate, my friends, on the part which the Father acts in the salvation of mankind, and which belongs to him. He is the First Person of the Trinity, the lawgiver and the judge with respect to the redemption of sinners; but we find it clearly recorded of the Son Jesus Christ, that he is the way through which alone any saved sinner comes to the Father. So that to stop at pardon and conversion is clearly not in accordance with the doctrine of Scripture. Jesus Christ is the door through which every individual reaches the Father; both Jew and Gentile, says the Apostle, have access to the Father through one Spirit. It is evident, from the records of truth, that to the Father belongs the appointment of all things, and that he appointed a Mediator. The Lord Jesus Christ met God as a Judge. He is called the Judge of all: "We are come," says the Apostle, "to God the judge of all." You will perceive from the Scripture, that God the Father is the source of all the blessings which sinners receive through Christ. "Blessed," says an Apostle, "be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us in him from the foundation of the world." So that we see the appointment of blessings to believers, as well as

the election of sinners by God, is through Jesus Christ. Hence I infer, that whenever a sinner comes to Jesus Christ and passes through him to God, he first comes to him as to a judge, he ranks as guilty before God his judge and the Judge of all, and he acquits God of injustice, as the Psalmist says, "That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." The sinner has to do with the Father in his acquittal. God justifies as well as condemns. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of those for whom Christ died? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?" What person in the blessed Godhead is it that justifieth? It is the Father; so that sinners receive their sentence from the Father. I would observe, farther, with respect to this access to God, that the soul comes to receive the sentence of justification from God. The soul comes to the Father to receive the Spirit, not the spirit of condemnation, but the Spirit of holiness, the Spirit of consolation, the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of grace, and the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, *Abba Father!* The soul comes to the Father through Christ, for all blessings, becomes one of his family, enjoying all its privileges. Here, I would observe, that the soul cannot enjoy any blessings, unless it enjoys the presence of God. The language of the Church is, "I will praise thee, O Lord; for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me." The Lord is become my salvation; he dwells in me; it is the enjoyment of him that is my salvation. And so with respect to the light of his countenance, the soul finds this preferable to all earthly joys. "While many say, who will show us any good? Lord lift thou the light of thy countenance on us always." Within the door all is light, while without the door, the world is lying in worse than Egyptian darkness. Within the door you find access to the heavenly climate, the spiritual atmosphere, which is enlightened and blessed by the eternal sunshine of the Father's countenance, and the shining of the Sun of Righteousness. This with all other blessings comes through Christ, the door of access. He gives guidance, protection, and all the blessings of eternal glory. "The Lord will give grace and glory."

But I must proceed to say, in the third place, that Christ is the door of admission to all the rights, privileges, and qualifications of his Church. You will observe, that the Redeemer tells us, that all those who climb up by the wall, and all, in short, who do not enter into his Church by him as the

door, are thieves and robbers. He is the only proper door and entrance to the privileges of the Church, and to all privileges in Christ. The Church was purchased by his blood. Hence, I have not the least doubt, that it is included in the doctrine of our text, that no person can be a member much less a minister in Christ's true Church, except that person enter in through him as the door, and by faith come to God through him; nor is it probable that those who have not thus entered will ever be honoured to feed his flock. I do not mean to say that a man who has not thus entered cannot be a member of the visible Church, for that may happen through the error of weak fallen creatures. The foolish virgins were in company with the wise, but they were separated at last. But when I speak of the true Church of Christ, and of the sheep to whom the Father gives eternal life, I say that no individual can have entrance to, or enjoy the privileges of this house, and the rights connected with the family of Christ, but through Christ as the door. I would here notice, that a man ought not to rest satisfied with being admitted a member of the visible Church. He ought to inquire whether his profession be the result of a genuine faith in Jesus Christ; whether, in consequence of this, he has gone forward to make public profession of his faith. He ought not to rest satisfied till he has obtained evidence that he has entered into the Church through Christ as the door. I need not say, my friends, that this is a subject with which a minister of Christ ought to be practically acquainted. Jesus Christ is the door of admission to all the pastors of his Church. They may pass the ordeal of education—they may have talents and gifts; but unless they have entered through Christ as the door to the Father, and received of the Spirit from his fulness, they cannot have the faith of a minister, nor are they promised that grace which enables the regular pastor to be useful. When I speak of being regular, I do not mean regularly ordained by the Church, but I speak of regularity according to the law^s of the New Testament; and I would observe, that every one ought to put the questions, Have I come in through Christ as the door? Have I come in through any other way? Was it for love of lucre that I came in? Or have I really entered the Church in consequence of coming through Christ as the door? Do I feel myself under a particular obligation to devote myself to the service of my Redeemer, who has obtained access to the Father for me through the shedding of his blood? I am addressing some of the ser-

vants of the Lord, and they will go along with me in saying, that the more a man satisfies himself on these points, the more he will experience the presence of God, and the more likely will he be to be useful in his vineyard.

It may, perhaps, be asked, What has all that has been said to do with patronage? Are we not assembled this evening for the purpose of making a collection to defray the expense of petitioning Parliament for the abolition of that system? Is not this the professed object of our meeting? I allow it. There has already been a considerable number of petitions sent to Parliament, and a great many of them from this district, with numerous signatures. The object of these petitions is to procure the repeal of the Act of 1712, with reference to lay-patronage—that is, patronage which is not in the Church, in the heritors, and in the parishioners, as was the case previous to the passing of that Act. The object of the petitions is merely to have that Act repealed. It does not become us to say, then, how the question should be adjusted. Perhaps there might be considerable difference amongst good men, whether the State or the Church of Scotland should fix what ought to be the law of settlement. I am of the latter opinion; and I do not know if there are many here who do not agree with me. I think that not only ought no minister to be forced on a congregation, but that every minister should be settled by the voice of the congregation. On this point we are almost all agreed; and if this point be gained, a great deal is done. I would rejoice to see the day that this was the law in Scotland, and when such a thing should not be heard as that a minister was put over a congregation, and that they could not object because his character was not immoral. It is not, however, enough that the abolition of patronage would be a negative good; it would also be a positive good. Ministers would be much more useful when they received the good wishes of their flock. The law of patronage interferes with the doctrine of my text, which does not allow one to be put over the flock who has not entered by the door. It sometimes, no doubt, happened that patrons did consult the wishes of the people, but that did not go far to remove the evil. The law of patronage makes no reference whatever to the doctrine of my text. It does not inquire whether the minister has entered through Christ as the door. It is through the door of patronage that he is admitted; and this is placing the settlement of a pastor upon a very different footing than that which the Redeemer intended.

It is true that it may be said, that if an improper person be placed over a congregation, that the fault is not in the patron but in the Presbytery. This is true; but two blacks do not make a white. The Presbytery can only judge of external qualifications; they cannot enter into the recesses of the heart; if a person appears to be outwardly qualified in all respects, by the rules of the Church, the Presbytery is bound to admit him. If he has attended college, and studied the regular time, and gone through the various exercises prescribed, though he has not entered by Christ the door, he is admitted. But, farther, a minister may be suited for one situation and not for another; he may be agreeable to one congregation and not to another. Now, I would say, that however well qualified a man may be, and however good man he may be, yet if he have not the affection of his people, if they be opposed to him, it is inexpedient, as well as unscriptural, to force him on them; for he cannot be useful amongst them. He may be useful in another situation, where he will, perhaps, be joyfully received. There ought, therefore, to be no interference with the law of Christ. But, it may be asked, if a man be regularly chosen by the voice of the people, may not they make an improper choice? True, the people are not infallible in making a proper choice; but what mode can be adopted that is not liable to abuse and to mistakes? Every thing human is imperfect; but we speak of the probability there is that the Church would be by this mode furnished with ministers likely to be useful, when they were appointed at the desire of the people, when they have their affections, their prayers, and their willing obedience. I would observe that, in all the instances where I had the power of knowing, though I would not promise that an improper choice has never been made, I would say, that in all these cases I am not aware of any unpleasant consequences having followed, unless when the people were under improper influence. We are here speaking of the right vested in the Church by Christ her Head; let her have this right, and then leave the consequences to him. The Redeemer has promised that he will give to his Church pastors according to his own mind. Let us rely on him, and he will fulfil his promise. The present system interferes with this doctrine, "I am the door;" and on this ground I object to the system, and I call on all the friends of Christ. I call on all the friends of truth, I call on all the friends of an Establishment of religion, that is, a proper union between the Church and the State—such an Establishment as does

not imply any interference of the State in the affairs of the Church, but such an Establishment as implies a recognition of religion by the State—such an Establishment as is conducive to the good of the Church and of religion, and not such as is calculated to be the bane of the Church—I call on all who are advocates for acceptable settlements throughout Scotland, I call on you all to come forward and support these petitions to the Legislature for the abolition of patronage. There may be differences of opinion as to who should have the power of choosing the minister, some being for fixing the right in the heads of families, others in the heritors, and others in the communicants. I am for the last plan; but let us all come forward in aid of this good work, and sooner or later we will bring about a result that will be beneficial to ourselves and to Scotland at large.

Let me now direct your attention to some considerations arising from this subject. I was aware that a multitude of precious souls would hear me to-night, and I resolved to address the Gospel freely to every sinner. Be it, then, known that Jesus Christ is to every soul present the door of mercy—the only way of access to God, to pardon, and to peace, and to reconciliation. It is in vain on your part to endeavour to find out any other door. You will bewilder yourselves, like the men of Sodom, groping for the door of Lot's house. Oh! my friends, think of the awful condition in which you will be, if you are shut out! Were the long, long night of eternity given to you, you would even fail in finding an entrance! Here is a door, a door of free access, which no man can shut; here you may enter without money and without price. This door is brought nigh to you in the Gospel; it is a door brought to your door. You are invited, you are called to draw near to God; for the word is in thy mouth and in thy heart. If thou believest in thy heart that Christ is the door, all the blessings of the Gospel are thine. Sinner, what dost thou mean to do? Dost thou mean to remain indifferent? Dost thou intend to go to heaven, to land in heaven at last? Then enter in by this door to the enjoyment of the blessings of salvation. Come now, I beseech you, by the mercies of God, I beseech you, by the blood of his Son, who is this door, to enter in by it. Here, and here only, can you receive the new birth and be pardoned and saved. Here only can you stand in the clothes of the Redeemer's righteousness and be entitled to the blessings of his kingdom. This door is open, if you do not close it upon yourselves. Consider

then and be wise while it is yet time, before the immortal spirit be about to wing its flight to where it is to abide for eternity. Do you ever inquire where all have gone who have lodged in tabernacles of clay? Would you be prevailed on to enter, you would spend an eternity of happiness in the presence of the Father, and with Him who is the door. The lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed you, and shall lead you by the fountains of living water, and God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes. May God pour out of his Spirit on you, and enable you to enter by this door.

Believer! carry about with you the impression of this duty and of this doctrine. Remember it when you go to your closet,

and bend your knee to God, and when you attend on the public means of grace. Remember that you will never reach God but through Christ as the door—that your soul will never be enlarged but through Christ as the way of access.

Finally, remember that your dying hour is approaching, when you must bid adieu to every thing earthly and visible; remember that Christ is the door—the gate to the celestial city. Endeavour to have this impressed on your mind, that the night of death may not take you by surprise. May the Lord enable the followers of Christ to act on this principle; and may the period soon arrive when the members and ministers of our Church will all enter through Christ the door!

ABSTRACT OF AN ADDRESS

TO MESSRS. WATT AND HARDIE, ON THE 22d JANUARY, BEING THE NIGHT OF THEIR ORDINATION, PREVIOUS TO THEIR DEPARTURE AS MISSIONARIES TO THE NAVIGATORS' ISLANDS.

By the Rev. ALEXANDER THOMSON,
Minister of George Street Chapel, Aberdeen.

My dearly beloved brethren, I know what it is to labour as the pastor of a church at home, but as I have never experienced what it is to be a missionary abroad, I cannot be so minute in my address to you as I might wish on the present occasion; having, however, been requested, as your pastor, to deliver a discourse at this time, I think there is not a passage in Scripture more appropriate for our consideration than Acts xx. 24—"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God."

At this late hour I shall not be tedious. I beg your attention to the following remarks, and shall consider, in the first place, what constitutes a scriptural call to the ministry of the Gospel; secondly, the message which you have to make known; and, thirdly, the dispositions you are called on to cherish in the course of your work.

I. In the first place, consider what constitutes a call to the christian ministry. I am aware that there is a distinction between the character of the Apostle and that of an ordinary minister of the Word. Several errors have originated from the confounding of these two characters; there is also a distinction between an ordinary pastor of a congregation and a missionary. A pastor is bound to discharge certain duties to his flock, and the people are bound to observe certain duties to their

pastor; but a missionary is sent out without any particular connexion with a church in the first instance. The field is the world, and many are the obstacles that stand in the way of the spread of the Gospel. Amongst these are the enmity of the heart, ignorance, and the love of sin. I am afraid, however, that another cause of the want of success is because some ministers run without having been sent; and if they run into the vineyard without being sent, they cannot expect that their efforts will be crowned with success: "How shall they preach except they be sent." The great question, then, for a missionary to ask himself is, am I really sent by Christ into his vineyard? I would observe, in the first place, that no one can be really sent who is not a true Christian. I do not say that all true Christians are fit to preach the Gospel at home, or to proclaim it abroad; but this I affirm, that no man, unless he be a truly converted character, is fit to be a preacher. The ministry is a spiritual work, and requires a spiritual character. A man must feel the power of the Gospel on his own heart before he is qualified to make it known to others. The prophet said, when he had his commission confirmed, "Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken

away and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me." Before our Saviour gave Peter the charge of the flock, he asked him the question three times, " Lovest thou me?" You have stated how you were brought to the Saviour. You have stated your views of divine truth. I trust you have found the Gospel to be the power of God to your own salvation.

In the second place, a minister must have irreproachable character—a good report of them that are without. It is a fearful thing when it can be said of a minister that he is a *good, eloquent, impressive* preacher, but an unholy character. It is a stumbling-block to the world; it enables the infidel to triumph, saying, Aha! aha! so would we have it. It ill becomes the drunkard to reprove intemperance; it ill becomes the swearer to reprove profane oaths; and it ill becomes the unholy man to say, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Well may it be replied to such persons, Physician heal thyself! thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself!

In the third place, a minister must be sound in the faith, able to oppose the gainsayers with sound doctrines; God would never send *one* to teach error, for error is as dangerous as immorality. " Charge them that they teach no other doctrine than that which I have commanded." There is great stress laid upon sound doctrine in the Bible. Error has always a bad effect, and truth has always a good effect. If I were called on to point out what I thought were the books written by man, which contained the soundest doctrines, I would mention the Westminster *Confession of Faith* and the *Shorter Catechism*. We are one with our brethren of the Established Church, in regard to the leading doctrines of their Standards. We have just heard what doctrines you mean to proclaim to the heathen. Oh! brethren, be *steadfast*; hold fast the faithful Word, that you may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince gainsayers.

4thly. *Fitness for the work.* A minister ought to be *apt* to teach; it is necessary to receive gifts from the great head of the Church. I trust, my young friends, you have received gifts which will enable you to be useful; natural talents are given by Christ, and they must be improved by a liberal education.

In the fifth place, a minister ought to have an ardent desire for the good work; it must be *strong, constant, and disinter-*

ested; so much so, that he could not be happy in any other employment; and this desire, my dear brethren, I hope God has implanted into your hearts.

In the sixth place, there must be the call of the Church, without which a minister cannot act officially. There is the *internal call* and external call of the Church. You have received the sanction of the Church, and we recommended you to the London Missionary Society. You have got suitable instructions, and have just now been set apart by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. You are now authorized to make known the truths of the Gospel, and to labour in the vineyard of Christ, either at home or abroad; and I trust, by trying yourselves by these six particulars, you will experience that you are called to the ministry by Christ himself.

II. The second thing to be considered is the message you have to make known. The Gospel is divinely adapted to the circumstances of man. You are to declare good tidings to all men. The Gospel is alike suited to the case of the highest literary character, or to a person in the lowest state of barbarism and degradation. It teaches man at the hour of death to gaze on eternity without alarm, to rejoice in the dark valley of the shadow of death, and to cry out, " O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" The Gospel was first preached at Jerusalem, according to the commandment of Christ. This was a grand display of abounding grace. The very murderers of the Son of God were the first to receive a free pardon; the atoning blood washed those who crucified the Lord of glory. This shows that no precious qualification is necessary for receiving the divine favour. The Gospel is intended to be made known to all nations. Infidels object to it, that it cannot be the true religion, on the ground that it is confined within narrow limits. Yet Christianity, we say, was by the design of God appointed to be preached in every land. Judaism was a local religion; but the wall of partition is now thrown down, and God is the God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews. Every creature needs the Gospel; it is adapted to the case of every child of Adam. The Apostle gave a challenge to all the philosophers in the world, when he said, " Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? for after that, in the wisdom of God, the world

by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." The grand truth you have to preach is the doctrine of Christ and him crucified. " If I be lifted up, I shall draw all men unto me." You are not sent to study the commerce of the country which you are going to; you are not going to enter into the politics of that country, or interfere with its laws and regulations, but to declare to the people the whole counsel of God. I would recommend to you to follow the example of the Moravian missionaries in Greenland; when they commenced their career, all they said or did was in vain, till they came to describe what Christ had suffered for guilty man; then their hearts were melted and mollified, and the tears of contrition ran down their faces. You should try the same experiment. This is the all-important doctrine you should make known; and you should determine to know nothing among the people " but Jesus Christ and him crucified."

III. The third thing that I have to consider is, the dispositions you are to cherish; and in the first place, I would recommend *zeal*. It is good to be zealous in a good cause, and without zeal and diligence you cannot expect success; but I would also recommend *knowledge* and *prudence*. If you be very zealous without knowledge and prudence, then you will not do your work well; and he that has knowledge without zeal is not likely to be useful; but when all are united then the thing is as it should be. The ease of a single sinner perishing for lack of knowledge ought to melt the heart, and excite commiseration; but what must we think when we take a view of the *vast multitudes* of immortal souls in the world who know of no Saviour, and consequently must be perishing. But you are to carry the remedy with you, and you are to press it on their attention; you are to declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Were you to go to a city afflicted with cholera, and if you knew an effectual remedy for the disease, would it not be your duty to press it on every one who was seized with the distemper? Well, my beloved brethren, you are in the same way now going to a people who are labouring under a disease much more dangerous than the cholera, because it affects the soul; press the remedy, therefore, upon the people.

The next thing which I would recommend is humility of mind, for " God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble;" this will lead to much prayer and self-denied labour on your part.

I would also recommend, in a particular manner, that you cultivate a spirit of *courage*,

such as is described in the text. Here I would, for a very little, allude to some difficulties which you are likely to meet with; the first thing that will occur to try your feelings or shake your resolution is, the taking farewell of your friends. I see them coming around you weeping and saying *farewell*, we shall never see you more in this side eternity! But this must not move you; you have opened your mouths to the Lord, and you cannot draw back. When you sail away and take the last glimpse of your native country, you will then say, " Farewell land of Bibles!" farewell, my christian friends, I am now going away, very likely never to meet with you again in this world. I am going to meet with perils by sea, and perils among the heathen. This will very much try your feelings, but you must be prepared to meet it with courage and composure. You will next experience a good deal of difficulty in learning the language of the people among whom you are going; this you will not, perhaps, be inclined at first to reckon such a difficulty, but when you see a people wholly given up to idolatry and you unable to speak one word to them about the Saviour, you will be ready to cry out, Oh! for the gift of tongues, oh! for a thousand tongues to proclaim the merits of Christ to a perishing world! Oh! that we could but communicate our ideas to this people, and convince them of their folly! Another difficulty which you will find will be in preserving in yourselves a spiritual frame of mind amongst so much wickedness. It is a very important thing to live near to God; ask his daily aid and counsel, that he may hold up your goings. I know not a more useless character than a carnal back-sliding missionary. A minister must pray much, and live near to God, in order to be useful. Another difficulty which you may probably experience after you have *learned* the language, will be the want of success. Many have laboured long in the South Sea Islands before they were successful. But say that you were successful, and that multitudes were converted and baptized, would you afterwards feel no anxiety about their spiritual state? Some may turn cold, others apostatize, and then will you feel as Paul did when warning the churches, Gal. iv. 8—11. You must recollect that Satan has long reigned unopposed in these islands, and you are now going to attack him. All the hosts of hell are against you; you are going to fight a battle, but the battle is not yours, but God's. Will the old serpent allow you to attack his empire and remain unconcerned? No! This you must not expect; there will be a struggle—a violent struggle between him and you.

tween Christ and Belial; and in the conflict you may be in great jeopardy, he may come down in great wrath for his time is short. You may be called on to lay down your lives in the cause, and, therefore, you must imbibe the spirit of a martyr. My dear brethren, are you willing to win the crown of martyrdom in the Navigators' Islands? You are not to be afraid either of men or devils; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, therefore you have nothing to fear; if you die in defence of the truth all is well.

I have now some particular encouragements to offer to you. In the first place, the benevolent and honourable nature of the work upon which you are sent ought to encourage you; you are not sent to tell the people of these islands how they may be happy for a few years, but you are sent to tell them how they may escape eternal burnings, and be joined to the multitude of the redeemed in heaven—a multitude which no man can number; you are to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan, to the living God, &c. In the next place, there are certain noble examples which you must fix your minds on. Think on the example of Henry Martin, keep your eyes on Brainard, on the example of Paul; but above all, keep your eyes on the example of Jesus Christ, the greatest missionary that ever appeared in the world. Lest you be weary and faint-hearted, consider that you go away accompanied by the prayers and sympathies of your christian brethren. You are to let us hear from you when you arrive at the place of your destination, and as soon as you begin to have any prospects of success. If you are called upon to weep, we will weep along with you; and if you rejoice, we will rejoice also. God forbid that ever we should cease to pray for you. When you meet with trials and difficulties, just remember that your christian brethren in Aberdeen are praying for you.

In the fifth place, have your faith firmly fixed on the words of the Saviour, "Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world," and that sweet promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Remember how many tears have been dried up, how many sorrowful hearts have been made glad, and how many broken hearts have been healed by these words, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Keep your eyes likewise fixed on the certainty of success; you are not going out on a hopeless errand. "As truly as I live,"

saith Jehovah, "all the earth shall be full of the glory of the Lord." Yes! the Saviour's kingdom will be extended over all the earth; men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed; the gods that made not the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. This must come to pass, for the Lord hath said it.

I must notice, in the last place, that you may with confidence look forward to your reward. Consider the trust committed to you, and the responsibility connected with your situation; necessity is laid upon you, wo is unto you if ye preach not the Gospel. What will be the consequence if you be unfaithful and give up the teaching of sound doctrine? I would much rather, my dear brethren, hear that you were dead, though I hope better things of you. Yet can any man say that the warning is unnecessary? If you are unfaithful, you must expect nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment. But let us turn to another view. If you continue faithful unto the end, what will be your reward? *The crown of life*: for they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. You will hear your Master say at the last day, "Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." My dear brethren, we are now about to part, and it is likely we shall never see each other again, till we meet at the bar of Christ to give an account of our stewardship. I would say, then, go to yonder islands and seek out the lost sheep, in all places where they are scattered; in the cloudy and dark day, go and bring them into the fold of the glorious Immanuel, feed them with the true bread which came down from heaven for the life of the world; go and preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to keep you and build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.

I have now a duty to perform which I do with great pleasure. The Church have requested me to present each of you with a copy of the Sacred Volume. Take this book, then, beloved brethren, to be a light to your feet and a lamp to your paths. May you draw from it all your consolation in this world; may you be honoured to hold forth the Word of Life to the poor perishing heathen: give heed to it as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts. May grace, mercy, and peace be with you; and may God himself be your reward. Amen.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 21ST JUNE, 1834.

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BEING EVER WITH THE LORD;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL OF EASE, ALBION STREET, GLASGOW, ON
MONDAY, 7th APRIL, 1834,

By the Rev. J. M'KINLAY, D.D.,
Minister of the Low Church, Kilmarnock.

"And so shall we be ever with the Lord."—1 THES. iv. 17.

CHRISTIANITY, my brethren, may with great propriety be styled the religion of the afflicted; for Christ is the consolation of Israel, and he came to comfort all who mourn. In his Gospel he has opened up sources of consolation sufficient for the afflicted believer, to cheer him in every season of sorrow, to support him under all his burdens, and to sustain him under his various privations and painful bereavements in the present world. It is obviously the design of the Apostle in the preceding part of this chapter, to comfort the Christians in the church of Thessalonica, under the distress they felt by the death and departure of their beloved relatives and faithful friends. He does not prohibit them from feeling and expressing sorrow on these mournful occasions; for that, you know, is natural, and is not to be condemned, since Christ himself wept at the grave of Lazarus. He only wished them not to indulge in excessive sorrow, or, as he expresses it, not to sorrow as those who have no hope. For this purpose he set before them the doctrines of the Gospel, its cheering discoveries of a blessed resurrection and glorious immortality, and adds, as in the 14th verse, "For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are

asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air;" and he adds in the words of my text "And so shall we ever be with the Lord."

It is my purpose in this discourse, in the first place, to consider some of the truths which are evidently included in this consolatory declaration, and then to conclude with some practical deductions from what may be advanced.

First, then, I am to consider some of the important truths evidently included in this consolatory verse, "So shall we ever be with the Lord." And here it is natural for me to remark, in the first place, that these words obviously imply that, after the resurrection and general judgment, all true Christians shall be brought into a state of personal nearness unto our Lord Jesus Christ. So long as Christians remain in this present world, they may be said to be at a distance from their Lord. "While we are at home in the body," says Paul, "we are absent from the Lord." From this expression, however, you are not to imagine that Christians in this world are deprived of the gracious presence of their Lord; for although we readily admit that ubiquity is not a quality of our Lord's glorified body,

yet we maintain, that being possessed of a divine nature, he is omnipresent; and consequently we hear him saying unto his followers, "Wherever two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them, to bless them and to do them good." If we have this day then met in this house in the name of Christ, from a regard to his authority, and a desire to enjoy his presence, to experience his power, and to receive his blessing, he is in the midst of us, and ready to bless us with every necessary blessing. At the same time it must be admitted that Christ in his glorified humanity is now gone from earth to heaven. The heavens have received him, and they must retain him till the restitution of all things. He has gone to heaven, and removed to an immense and immeasurable distance from this remote province in the kingdom of the great Sovereign of the universe; and as this is the case, there is no way of our coming near unto him but by the gate of death. When we come to die and leave this, our spirits immediately return to and are in the presence of Christ above, and our bodies, though laid in the grave, shall not remain there always, but be raised again and united to our glorified spirits, and then in our whole person we shall be brought near unto him; and the words of the Psalmist shall be realized, "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the King's palace, and there abide;" "for if I go away," says Christ, "I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you my servants may also be." What shall be the joy resulting from being thus personally admitted into the presence of Him? All we know is that we shall be brought near to him; we shall be brought so near to him, that we shall be made pillars in his temple; we shall be brought so near to him, that we shall stand around his throne; we shall be brought so near to him, that we shall sit with him upon his throne, and derive from this nearness happiness which cannot at present be experienced or expressed. If the Apostles and disciples were happy in enjoying the personal presence of Christ during his personal ministry on earth, in hearing his instructions, and in receiving his counsels, how happy shall believers be when they are personally admitted into his presence, and to the sight of his glory and pre-eminent exaltation! If in this world when loyal subjects are sent upon an embassy or mission by a sovereign, and

after they have discharged that embassy with success are happy in being admitted into the presence of their sovereign again; and if, on receiving his approbation, all his servants are happy in being near and in the presence of their master; if the servants of Solomon were happy in standing before him and hearing his wisdom, and if children are happy in being near and in the presence of their parents, say what shall be the happiness of Christians when they shall be thus personally admitted into the presence of their Lord, especially when I repeat that declaration of the Psalmist, in regard to that presence, "In his presence there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore!"

But another truth obviously implied in the words of my text is this, that all true Christians, after the resurrection and general judgment, shall be blessed with the immediate vision of the Saviour's face, and of the mediatorial glory which he now enjoys in the heavenly world. This is evident from the prayer of our Lord, in regard to his disciples, "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." This prayer shall be realized and fulfilled in regard to all the disciples of Christ. You will readily admit it was the high honour and privilege of the disciples to be allowed to be with our Lord on the mount of transfiguration, where they saw his glory, and said, It is good to be here. This was a single miraculous manifestation, such as is not to be expected by Christians now while on the face of the earth. It is in fact a manifestation which we are not fitted to enjoy; for, were the glory of Christ to beam upon us, it would overpower our sight, and we would be incapable of enjoying it; hence it is, you remember, that when Saul, on his way to Damascus, had a vision of the glory of Christ, he fell to the ground, and was blind for some days; and, again, when John, in the island of Patmos, saw the glory of Christ in prophetic vision, he fell down at his feet as dead. And if the glory of Christ to-day were to shine upon this assembly, it would overpower *our* vision; we would not be able to bear its splendour, for flesh and blood, man as at present constituted, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. We can only in our world see the glory of Christ, then, by the eye of faith; and yet the view which Christians have of the glory through this medium, is sufficient to make him the object of our supreme affection and

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highest esteem ; and if we now see his glory by the eye of faith, the time will come when we shall see his glory in a different manner through the eye of our risen and glorified body. Christ has gone to heaven, and he is concealed from our view. We shall not, however, always live by faith. On the contrary, on the morning of the resurrection our bodies shall be raised powerful bodies, and we have every reason to believe, that the eye of our glorified bodies shall, like our bodies, be powerful and extensive, and fitted to bear the glory of our exalted Lord ; for if we are told that the eagles can look upon the blazing sun, is it not natural to think that the eyes of the Christian's glorified body shall, not only be able to bear the glory of Christ, but even to feel love and pleasure in contemplating that glory ? It shall not be a painful but a pleasant perception ; our sight shall be adapted to the medium of heaven, and we shall both feel the glory of Christ, and rejoice in it evermore. Oh ! my friends, what a delightful sight will this be ! The heart of Job seems to have had a believing conviction of it, when he expressed himself in those memorable words, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth : and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God : whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another ; though my reins be consumed within me." Isaiah, too, seems to allude to it, when he says of the people of God, "They shall see the King in his beauty and the land that is afar off ;" and again the beloved disciple expressly announces this truth in his Book of the Revelations, when he says of the people of God in heaven, "There shall be no more curse : but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it ; and his servants shall serve him : and they shall see his face." Oh ! my brethren, this shall not be an idle, this shall not be a mere contemplative view. It shall be a deep impressive view, connected with feelings and emotions of which, at present, we can form no adequate conception, but those feelings and emotions shall lead us to admire in gratitude, and fit us for serving him in heaven, as our faith on earth fits us for serving him in this valley of tears. We understand not all the pieces of service in which the redeemed shall be engaged in heaven. We know they shall be engaged in the pleasing exercise of praise ; and, oh !

when they do see the Saviour in heaven, how they shall admire him, and love him, and praise him ! Then they shall see that face which on earth was marred more than the face of any man, and even covered with shame and spitting ; they shall see that face smiling with brightness, with more than the brightness of a thousand suns ; they shall see that head, which on earth bore the crown of thorns, crowned with glory and honour, and raised above every name ; they shall see that body, which in this world was dressed in mock majesty, transformed into a glorious body, and shining with a beauty and brightness of which, at present, we can form no adequate conception.

But I go on to remark, in the third place, that another important truth, obviously included in the consolatory declaration in my text, is, that all true Christians shall, in the heavenly world, attain to a perfect resemblance to the image of Jesus Christ. "All the children of God," we are assured by Paul, are predestinated to be conformed to the image and likeness of Jesus Christ. As they have all in this world borne the image and likeness of the earthly, they shall in yonder world bear the image of the heavenly, Adam. This resemblance commenced in the moment of regeneration, when they were renewed in the spirit of their minds, and, consequently, in some degree restored to his resemblance. The great design of the Gospel is to restore fallen man to the image, the likeness, and the enjoyment of his Maker. This image he lost by the fall ; this likeness is perfectly restored in regeneration, but its features are faint and dull at first ; but, by a constant contemplation of the glory of Christ, the features become more marked and more visible. By contemplating the glory of God as in a glass, we are changed into the same image. Though the body, then, shall after death be laid in the grave, it shall be refined and raised in glory, and made conformable to the body of Christ himself. The soul, going to heaven, joins the spirits of the just made perfect, and in the morning of the resurrection this spirit shall be re-united to the glorified body, and then the believers shall, in body and soul, resemble the Lord Jesus Christ. This resemblance, in regard to the body of Christ, which shall be the exemplar, the pattern of the glorified body of the saints, we cannot now understand ; and in regard to the soul, all we can say of it is, that it shall be greatly improved. Contemplating

infinite knowledge in the heavenly world, the mind shall be enlarged and enlightened ; contemplating the beauty of moral excellence, morality shall advance in the redeemed soul ; contemplating the glory of redeeming mercy, the love of God shall be fully shed abroad in the heart, and the redeemed man shall exhibit a complete resemblance of the Lord Jesus Christ. This resemblance, remark, is of such a nature, that it must shed a glory and a lustre around the redeemed, which in this world we cannot perceive. You remember in the case of Moses, that when he was only forty days in the mount of God, his face shone so bright, that when he came down the people could not behold it. He was obliged to veil his face, that he might converse with them without terror. The glory, then, of the redeemed in heaven shall be bright, and there shall be no need for veiling it. There the eyes of the glorified bodies of the saints are fitted to contemplate the glory of Christ, and are not to be overpowered by it ; and yet, I apprehend in my judgment, though in a modified sense, the resemblance to Christ shall be perfect, yet shall not be stopped in its progress ; for it appears to me reasonable to think that, by constantly contemplating the glory of Christ in heaven, there shall be a gradually increasing progress in the perfection and happiness of the redeemed. They shall experience the increase of intellectual knowledge, of moral excellence, of holy and heavenly enjoyment. They shall, if I may so express myself, be gradually and constantly approximating nearer and nearer to the glory of Christ, and yet they shall never equal that glory, because, being finite creatures, it is impossible in the nature of things they can ever equal the infinite excellence and glory of the redeemed Lord. Here thoughts may arise, but language fails in ideas.

I go on to remark farther, that another important truth, obviously contained in the consolatory declaration of my text, is this, that all true believers in the heavenly world shall enjoy a constant sense of the presence, and love, and friendship of their exalted Lord. Christians, you all know, in their natural state were, like others, once enemies unto God in their minds, and at enmity by their wicked walk ; but while on earth a remarkable revolution took place in their state and character—they were reconciled to God through faith in the Redeemer—they were brought into his innumerable fa-

vor, and had an interest in his friendship ; and our Saviour acknowledges this, when he says, “ I have not called you servants, but I call you friends, for the love I bear unto you.” Now, let me here remark, brethren, that the love and friendship which the redeemed shall enjoy with their Lord in heaven, is quite different from the love and friendship which exists in general among human beings on the face of the earth. This world is a changing, shifting scene ; its friendships are not permanent, but temporary ; they are frequently not sincere ; they are apt to decay, and are ready to terminate or expire. Such is not the nature of the love and friendship which subsist between Jesus the Lord of glory and the objects of his love. Having loved them, he loved them with an everlasting love. He draws them with the cords of love to him ; he keeps them by these cords near unto him, and they always enjoy, even in this world, his love and friendship, though at times, I allow, they are apt to call this into question. I do not deny, however, nay, I admit, that even Christians in this world, who enjoy the love and friendship of Christ, may not always enjoy a sense of this love and friendship. From want of vigilance and circumspection, and from the remains of corruption within them, they fall into sin and into iniquity ; and although Christ their Lord continues still to love their persons, yet he continues to hate and abhor their sins and iniquities, and to testify his displeasure with these, by correcting them, withdrawing the light of his countenance from them, and thus he occasions one of the greatest mental distresses which a Christian on this earth can experience. As the love of a father is highly valued by an obedient son, as nothing is more oppressing to him than the frowning or reproof of his father, so there is nothing which more distresses a Christian than to think that by his criminal conduct he has made the Son of God to withdraw the light of his countenance from him.

You remember a case in sacred history. Absalom was the favourite son of his father but Absalom raised the standard of rebellion against his father ; his father still loved him, however, and although upon account of his criminal conduct in another case, he allowed him to come and live in his own house at Jerusalem, yet it was upon a very particular account, and in a limited view ; he allowed him to come to Jerusalem and to

live in his own house, too, but he was never to see the face of his father—he was not to be permitted to approach the royal presence. If this was the case with Absalom, what must be the withdrawing of the divine countenance from the children of God! But in regard to them it is only temporary; he hides his face for a little; he loves them still, and when they are humbled and return to him, confessing their guilt, like a kind father he receives them again, looks upon them with benignity, and rejoices over them to do them good. But in the heavenly world there shall be no sin in the redeemed to cause the Lord to hide his face from his people for a single moment; there shall be no cloud there to obscure their sky; there no frown shall ever be seen on their Saviour's countenance; there no reproof shall ever be heard to proceed from their Saviour's lips, but the Saviour's love and friendship shall beam upon them with increasing benignity, and they shall be as sensible of his love, and kindness, and friendship, as they are of their own existence. Even in this world Christ rejoiced over them to do them good; but now when he has them all around his throne, all holy, he rests in his love towards them; he rejoices over them to do them good; he leads them and feeds them, and God himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

But, I remark still farther, that another important truth obviously contained in the declaration of my text is this, that the happiness of the saints in the heavenly world shall not be a solitary but a social happiness. I am led to adopt this idea from the manner in which the Apostle speaks of the redeemed here, for you will notice he speaks of them in a collective capacity, and he treats them all with "we shall be ever with the Lord." All the sons and all the servants of God shall there meet together, and they shall all, as in an immense glorious city, dwell with their Lord. Man, you know, of his own nature, is a social being; we are formed for society, and our happiness as social creatures is enjoyed in greater perfection than it could be enjoyed in solitude. If it were possible for us to live in perfect solitude our happiness would not be so great as when we lived in a christian and well-regulated city. In a city of this character our wants are supplied, our social affections are gratified, we meet with objects that are fitted for them to act upon, and by contem-

plating and loving them our social happiness increases; and if our societies on earth were more perfect than they are, our happiness in this world would be greatly increased. Were all real Christians united not only by the bonds of a common humanity, but by christian friendship; if every Christian loved his neighbour as himself; were every Christian in his situation and place ready to discharge every social duty to his neighbour, what a happy world might this appear to be! It would, in fact, be a kind of heaven upon earth. The society, however, we meet with in this world is a mixed society, the good and the bad are blended together. Some of its good men are removed by death, and leave us to lament their departure, and some bad members are admitted to live and prove troublers of Israel; but in the heavenly world no friend departs, no enemy is permitted to enter. There every member is holy, and humble, and happy, loving his neighbour as himself, and he feels his happiness increased by its being such an extended happiness. Oh! there is enough, enough in heaven to make us all happy, enough of light in yonder sun to enliven every eye! Nor do we enjoy light less because it is enjoyed by thousands of spirits; and in heaven our happiness shall not be diminished but increased by participation. We shall look around us and survey an immense and innumerable society, all of them holy, all of them happy, and joining in one social happiness. It is pleasing to think that we are Christians in the way to heaven; that in a little we shall enjoy this heavenly society; that in a little we shall be associated with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the ancient patriarchs; that in heaven we shall be associated with all the holy men of God, from Enoch, the seventh from Adam, to Malachi, the last of the prophets. We shall meet in heaven with all the primitive Christians and martyrs, and what brings it nearer to our own bosoms and our own families, we shall there meet again with all our christian relatives and friends whose death we live to deplore; we shall be reunited to them by the bonds that shall never be broken; we shall live with them and rejoice with them in the heavenly kingdom. There all are happy; there every eye looks to Jesus; there every heart loves the Redeemer; there every mouth is opened in his praise; and there with one heart and voice they shall unite

for ever in ascribing salvation to God, and to the Lamb :

Ten thousand thousand are their tongues,
And all their joys are one.

I have only time to remark, in the last place, that another truth contained in the declaration is this, that the redeemed in the heavenly world shall enjoy felicity that shall be satisfactory in its nature, and eternal in its duration. I am led to this by the concluding words of the declaration. The Apostle says they shall be for ever with the Lord. This world is under the curse; it was not intended before the curse to be the portion of the unfallen; and if it could not be our portion at first, how could it be our satisfaction now when it is under the curse. The men of the world say it can make them happy, and hence they are employed in the pursuit of its wealth, its honours, or its pleasures. These appear of immense value to them before they are acquired; but although they appear so, the moment they acquire them, they find them shadows and not substances; and even in regard to Christians, although awakened and concerned about their eternal interests, and although I admit they enter into rest when they believe in Christ, yet it will correspond with your experience, when I say that your highest enjoyment in the Redeemer, in this world, is not completely satisfactory; you always desire more than ever yet you have enjoyed, and you desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better. Now heaven is the place where perfect satisfaction is enjoyed. There, what the Psalmist says shall be realized: "I shall be satisfied." When? "When I awake with thy likeness." Yes! He shall then enjoy so much that he can enjoy no more; he may desire, indeed, more of it, but more than the happiness of heaven the soul of man cannot enjoy. It is stated to satisfy every wish, every want, to make him happy for evermore; and, therefore, it is said we shall be for ever with the Lord. They that enter heaven and upon the happiness of heaven, know that it is a permanent, everlasting happiness they shall there enjoy; for they shall be blessed with eternal glory, the crown of the Lord that shall be placed upon their heads shall continue to shine for ever and ever—it is the crown of life never fading away. The inheritance upon which they enter is an "inheritance incorruptible,

undefiled, and that fadeth not away." They who are of the blessed world, know that their happiness shall be everlasting. Indeed, were the smallest suspicion to enter into the mind of a redeemed believer that his happiness however great would come to a termination, the very suspicion would damp the spirit, would destroy in short the happiness of heaven itself; but they who enter upon it know it shall be everlasting, they shall be for ever with the Lord. When millions of ages have rolled by, their happiness shall only be begun, and their happiness shall continue to go on during all the revolving ages of eternity. The fountain of their happiness, like the throne of God from which it arises, is an everlasting fountain; and the stream of happiness fed by this fountain shall continue to flow on through the revolving ages of an eternal world—ay, in the beautiful language of the prophet of the Lord, "The ransomed of the Lord shall come to Sion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Thus have I endeavoured to direct your attention to a few of what appear to me the most important truths contained in the consolatory declaration of the text, and I should now, if your time permitted, conclude with some practical remarks. I shall name them that you may remember them, but I shall not be able to illustrate them. Well, in conclusion, do you, Christians, really hope in heaven to be brought into a state of personal nearness to your Lord? I know this is your hope, and what do I infer from this? The inference I draw from this is, if you hope to enjoy personal nearness to Christ in heaven, oh! live near to him, oh! live much upon him, that by grace you may be enabled to live much to him, and thus be prepared to live with him for ever in the heavenly world. Now this is just the direction of Christ himself, and I use his own words, which will have more authority than any I could employ: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." My earnest exhortation to you then, is, go forth to your duties. He will support you and comfort you, and you will

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go on from strength to strength, till you arrive safely in the heavenly Zion.

2. Do you hope to see the glory of Christ, his mediatorial glory in the heavenly world? Then learn here, while you can, to look to and contemplate the glory of Christ, by the eye of faith, as that glory shines in the works of surrounding nature, is reflected from this blessed book, and is exhibited to you in the Gospel, and at a communion table. What is the glory of visible nature? Christ created it. The glory of visible nature is nothing but the glory of Christ emanating from him the King of glory. Contemplate his glory, then, in this volume; and, oh! look into the Sacred Volume; it is the Word of Christ; it is a holy glass—a blessed glass; it reflects his glory; look into it from day to day; pore over it; it will exhibit to you the glory of Christ in his person and work; and if you do so, your faith will be turned into vision, and you shall see him as he is.

3. Do you hope in the heavenly world to be perfectly conformed to the way of Christ? Then I exhort you to study every day, and by every honest means, to be growing in purity and growing in conformity to his laws, that you may be gradually fitted for the happiness of heaven.

Further, do you hope in heaven to enjoy a constant sense of the love and friendship of Christ? Then I exhort you to guard against every sin, for hear what the Lord says to his people: "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." In this commercial city, and amid the bustle of business, how many are living under the influence of covetousness. The love of the world is a great root of all this evil. Beware of any thing that may be displeasing to your Lord. Keep yourselves free from iniquity; keep free from the vices to which you are most prone from constitutional temperament, from the time of life, from your employment in civil society.

Still further, do you hope in the heavenly world to meet before the redeemed in the Lord who have died in the faith and gone before you? Then I earnestly exhort you when you do meet with family bereavements, not to be too much dejected, not to sorrow as those who have no hope. Your christian friends were dear to you, but I remind you they were only lent you, they were not your personal property—they were

lent you for a little, and you should be thankful for the loan; and when removed, you ought not to find fault, but to say with Job, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away: blessed be the name of the Lord." He may remove your relatives, but not his love from you. And if any mournful christian widow is hearing me let her not sorrow. Your believing husband has gone to heaven before you; and if you love the Lord, he is your husband. Are there any before me who are mourning orphans? Remember that, in the best sense, you cannot be orphans if you are Christians. Remember the words, "I will never leave you comfortless." Be ye, then, followers of those who through faith and patience are inheriting the promises.

Finally, have you upon this occasion* been with the Lord? Have you seen the glory of Christ in his house or at his table? I exhort you when you leave this place, to carry such discoveries along with you, and let the world see where you have been, and show that you are more than ever attached to Christ, because you are more like to Christ. You read in the Gospel: "Now, when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." Now when you retire to mingle with the world, let me exhort you to show to the world that you have been with Jesus. By your purity and your piety, by your fortitude and your firmness, by your meekness and your humility, by your justice and your integrity, by your kindness and your beneficence, and by your enlightened zeal for supporting the glory of God and the best interests of man, show that you, on this occasion, have been with the Lord and imbibed his spirit, and that you determine to walk even as he walked; and if so, I can assure you, you will promote your own personal happiness, and edify others around you. You will enjoy peace and comfort in your own mind, and the light of your conversation will induce others to come and glorify your Father who is in heaven. I close the discourse in the exhortation of Peter, where in addressing Christians, he says, "And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, bro-

* Preached after the dispensation of the sacrament.

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therly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, shall be ministered unto you abundantly int
charity. For if these things be in you, and the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and S_o
abound, they make you that ye shall neither viour Jesus Christ." May such be the case
be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of all. May the Lord bless his Word,
our Lord Jesus Christ. And so an entrance and to his name be all the praise. Amen.

ABIDING WITH GOD;

A SERMON PREACHED ON SABBATH 23rd MARCH, 1834,

By the Rev. ALEXANDER BRUNTON, D.D.,

Senior Minister of the Tron Church, and Professor of Oriental Languages in the University of Edinburgh.

"Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God."—1 Cor. vii. 24.

AMONG those who at first called themselves by the name of Christ, it was to be expected that some would be found whose motives were selfish and worldly. These men promoted controversy in the church to which they belonged, that they might form a party for themselves, and thus advance their sinister purposes. In the city of Corinth they appear to have been peculiarly active, perplexing the minds of the converts, and ruining their peace by questions of idle debate or of dangerous tendency. They especially laboured to convince their brethren that a conversion to the faith of the Gospel undid social obligation—that it relieved the believing husband from his unbelieving wife—that it relieved the believing wife from her unbelieving husband—that it relieved the christian child from its unbelieving heathen father, and the believing slave from his unbelieving lord. Upon all these points the infant Church of Corinth, unable to decide for herself, turned for advice to the Apostle, and on all these topics St. Paul treats with the fulness of apostolical wisdom. His instructions upon all of them are marked with that discretion and charity which are the characteristics of true christian teaching. He expressly declares, that conversion to the faith of the Gospel was not to work any sudden or violent change in their temporal circumstances: "Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God." Let every man in those circumstances wherein the providence of God has placed him, when the call of the Gospel reached his ear, therein remain—unchanged in his temporal concerns by that light from on high, with which it hath pleased God to visit his understanding and his heart. I would, for the present,

lay entirely out of view the specialties with which this exhortation of the Apostle may be considered to have been attended at first, and would beseech you, in a[
to ourselves, to consider how much it is our interest and our duty that wherein we are called, therein we should abide with God. Now, assuredly this precept of the Apostle cannot mean, that from the moment when the name of Christ is named upon us, we should make no farther exertion for improving our condition in this world; that we should thenceforward sit down in listless indolence—renouncing every wish, every hope for advancement. This cannot be his meaning, for this is adverse to the whole tenor of gospel teaching. The Apostle elsewhere reminds us not to be s'othful in business, and that he that "will not work, ought not to eat." In the Old Testament, in the book of Proverbs especially, similar commands are frequent: "Love not sleep lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes and thou shalt be satisfied with bread. The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat. Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men. In all labour there is profit." It is impossible for us to enjoy the gifts of God which are actually in our possession, unless we are aiming at something higher and nobler. It is impossible to do justice to ourselves, if we seek not what the constitution of our nature teaches us—and teaches us innocently—to desire. We cannot do justice to our brethren, if we seek not our own advancement; for, in the true Christian, the desire of advancement is not a mere selfish desire. Every accession of influence or of wealth

he knows to widen the sphere of his duty ; every accession of influence or of wealth he knows to be a talent intrusted to him, which he is to employ for the giver's glory, which he knows he is to employ, not for his own indulgence, but for the general benefit, and of which he has an account to render in that great and terrible day. To counteract this natural and useful feeling in our frame cannot be the meaning of the Apostle in the passage now before us. We see it was not his meaning, even in the strictest sense of the exhortation, when it was first delivered. Although he exhorts the converts, "Let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God," that does not mean that they should not seek, by fair and honourable means, to better their situation when the Gospel reached them. On the contrary, he incites them to this by the noblest motives. Observe, in the 16th verse, how he encourages them to labour for the conversion of those with whom they were converted : "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband ? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife ?" He was far from forbidding him who was a slave, when the call of the Gospel reached him, to obtain liberty if he could acquire it by fair and lawful means. For what is the language he employs ? "Art thou called, being a servant ? care not for it ; but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather." And so also in regard to us : the precept before us does not prohibit us from seeking to better our external condition, in whatever circumstances we are placed in the wisdom and providence of God, by whatever obligation he binds us to our fellow-men. But *this* it commands, "That wherein we are called, therein we should abide with God" —that we should acknowledge his agency, and perform to him those duties he requires.

Wherin we are called, therein we ought to abide with God, implies, in the first place, that in the circumstances in which he has placed us, we habitually look to him as the disposer of our lot ; that we perform to him those duties to which, as the disposer of our lot, he is entitled. That God is the disposer of our lot reason teaches, and Scripture confirms the truth. He is the great Creator : by him were all things made, and without him was not any thing made that is made. And shall not the Creator have sovereign power to arrange as he will the lot of his own works ? He is our King and

Lord, and extendeth over the minutest subjects of his government his agency and his care. In those plans which direct the universe, the interests of individual men are not forgotten. "Behold, even I am he, and there is no God besides me. I form the light, and create the darkness ; I make peace and create evil : I the Lord do all these things. See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me : I kill and I make alive ; I wound and I heal : neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel." The Lord maketh poor, and the Lord maketh rich ; he lifteth up and casteth down. "Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the Judge : he putteth down one and setteth up another." The truth of this relation in which we stand to Almighty God, and the necessity of our acknowledging it, are too obvious for farther illustration. Now, what, I beseech you, are the duties which this our relation to Almighty God implies ? Are they not that we acknowledge with gratitude his mercy and love in time past, that we trust in him for our present and for our future welfare ? When we reflect on the history of the past —when we consider how much good hath mingled with its current—when we consider from how many dangers we have been preserved under which others have sunk ; with how many blessings we have been crowned which have been denied to our brethren round us ; what varied happiness has been provided for us in the various stages of life, both in the employment of the faculties with which we are gifted, and by the kindness and friendship of our brethren of mankind, shall not our souls magnify the Lord, and our spirits rejoice in God our Saviour ? "He that is mighty hath done great things : holy is his name, and his mercy is on them that fear him." And how must our gratitude be quickened when we consider who he is by whom these benefits have been bestowed, and who we are who have been permitted to enjoy them ? He is King of kings and Lord of lords ; he is exalted far above this world ; he is exalted far above the services of the highest cherubim. We are the children of the dust and sons of a day—our happiness or ruin in nothing alters the sum of his glory ; we are before him as the drop in the bucket, or as the small dust in the balance. He is an infinitely pure and holy

God; no corruption can mingle with his nature; iniquity cannot stand before him. We are stained with transgressions; we are enslaved by sin. At best we are unprofitable; but we are worse than unprofitable—rebellious and offending. We deserve not that our life should be prolonged; or that it should be prolonged otherwise than as an engine of punishment, as a means for inflicting on our sins the wrath of the God who made us. And yet even to us the Almighty extends his care; even to us he offers, not only his mercy, but his love. He lifts upon us the light of his reconciled countenance. If with grateful hearts we review the past, and render unto God thanksgiving and praise, this will lead us through his grace to trust in him in regard to our present fortune. Although it be marked with apparent hardships, or even real calamity, shall not our experience of his mercy in the past, lead us to conclude, that if God who has been the author of good to us in time past, visit us with some affliction, it must be because he sees affliction to be healthy for us; it must be part of that great plan through which he who knows best what is good for us is carrying forward our improvement and happiness? Though darkness may rest on our future prospect; though suffering may threaten and dangers environ it, shall it not excite our trust in God, to remember his kindness to us in times past? He is not man that his purpose should alter. He is not man that his purpose should fail. His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear; his arm is not shortened that it cannot save; he liveth and reigneth for ever and ever. Whatever be the circumstances in which our God sees it meet to place us, let us pray that we may be enabled habitually to look to him as himself the disposer of our lot; let us pray that we may be enabled for his past mercies, to render to him the tribute of gratitude and praise; let us pray that we may be enabled to trust in his wisdom and goodness, that he may reconcile us to the circumstances of our present lot, even when they are afflictive, and may lead us, when under affliction, to bless his name and do his will, that our experience of mercies in times past may arm us to meet the future with the assurance of his protection.

But, in the second place, wherein we are called therein to abide with God, implies that we should look to him habitually as the witness, not only of our actions,

but of the thoughts of our hearts. This also is a truth which reason teaches and which Scripture abundantly confirms. Among the perfections of God, omnipresence is necessarily one; and if we add to this, wisdom, and knowledge unbounded, the inference is certain that God is the witness of all things. God is to be our judge at last; and He who is to be our just and impartial judge, must know not only all our actions, but the motives from which our actions proceed. It is easy for the Creator, through channels which we know not of, to hold communion with the creatures he has made. It is easy for Him, through channels we know not of, to perceive and influence their purposes. Accordingly, sacred Scripture doth uniformly and invariably ascribe these offices to God. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; man looketh to the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh upon the heart. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness. He that planted the ear, shall not he hear? He that made the eye, shall not he see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know? His eyes are on the goings of man, and he seeth all his actions. The secrets of the heart are known unto God."

Now, what are the duties which ought to spring from our sense of this relation connecting us with Almighty God? Must not the very first sentiment which awakens in the heart be that of shame and sorrow for sin? That we have made Him, who is a God of infinite purity, the witness of our selfishness, injustice, and sin, is a thought of poignant regret and unspeakable terror! "Blessed be he that he visiteth not unto us our iniquities, that a door of mercy still is open, and that the hope of grace is still proclaimed." But if our sorrow for past offences be a godly sorrow, surely the desire and the prayer of our hearts will be that henceforth we may be less offensive to Him in whose sight the heavens are not clean, and who chargeth his angels with folly. It is true that we depend on his free grace alone for forgiveness—that we can make no compensation for the sins that are past. But it is not less true that "the author and finisher of our faith" requires obedience as a test of that faith with which we embrace the offers of gospel grace. It is true, that in the best of us future obedience will be imperfect, misguided in many things, and in many things stained with corruption and

sin. But it is not less true that the "author and finisher of our faith" requires of us, as indispensable, that our purposes of serving him be prompted by sincerity! And what will be the fruit, under his blessing and the influence of his grace, of living under a habitual sense of his inspection, and a habitual desire to serve him, but growing purity and growing devotion? It is impossible for us to live habitually under a sense of the inspection of Almighty God, and with a sincere desire to obey his law, without being moulded gradually upon the standard which that law and his Gospel set before us, reaching to not only actions, but even the very thoughts and desires of the heart. It is impossible for us not to feel that impurity of heart must not be less offensive in the sight of Him by whom the heart is searched, than that impurity which issues in action. It is impossible for us to live habitually under a sense of his inspection, and with a sincere desire to serve him, without growing in a devotional state of mind—without habitually using the noble privilege, which he himself has given us, of praying with all prayer and supplication at the footstool of his throne. He who is truly a Christian will thus "abide with God," not only in those stated times when the public or private exercises of devotion invite him to come more immediately into the presence of his Maker, when the exercises of the sanctuary, or of the closet, or of the family, induce him to offer his prayers to the great Lord and Father of all—often will he bring his prayers into the presence of his heavenly Father, when no human ear can catch the sound. He will gladden with the influences of devotion the business of busy life. He will gild with the influences of devotion the shades of his retirement. Well pleasing to God are those holy musings which connect the soul with its author. His blessing maketh them rich in spiritual improvement to the mind in which he permits them to dwell.

Thus have I endeavoured very shortly and simply to illustrate the duty recommended by the precept in the text: "Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God." We abide with God when we are enabled to look habitually to him as the disposer of our lot—when we are enabled to look habitually to him as the witness both of our actions and of our purposes; and when we are enabled through

his grace to perform the duties that these our relations towards him require.

Suffer me now shortly, in conclusion, to remind you of some circumstances that should recommend the practice of these. Consider, I beseech you, the wisdom of fulfilling these duties. It alters in no respect the relation in which we stand to God, whether we ourselves acknowledge him or not. He remains the disposer of our lot, whether we look to his agency or not. He remains the witness of our actions and of our thoughts, although we may refuse to set the Lord before us. Now ask yourselves, I beseech you, whether it be worthy of a rational nature that such relations as these should exist without our taking them for the guide of our conduct? Ask yourselves, I beseech you, whether it be worthy of a rational nature that subjects of contemplation so sublime and improving should be within our easy reach, without our gladly and seriously devoting ourselves to their study? Whatever is *terrible* to the sinner, in the character and perfections of God, remains unchanged, whether we abide with him or not. In spite of our reluctance its power will be felt, even in this life, and irresistibly felt in the life that is to come; but all that is instructive, and all that is consoling, and all that is delightful in the contemplation of the divine character we forego, when we refuse "wherein we are called, therein to abide with God."

Consider, in the second place, the peace and elevation which, through the blessing of God, the performance of this duty may shed over the soul. Is it the desire and prayer of our souls that we may rise superior to the vicissitudes of our mortal life, to those accidents, as he ventures to call them, under which we see the worldling bows? And where is there a charm so strong and influential to preserve us from their power as that we look habitually to God as the disposer of our lot? What from the hand of chance would be intolerable, is received with resignation of the hand of God. What is good in our lot, has double value when we consider it as ordained by the Almighty; and we are enabled to bear its afflictions by the assurance that he himself hath ordained them. Is it the earnest desire and prayer of our souls that we may obtain superiority to the temptations around us? Is it the earnest desire and prayer of our souls that we may be enabled to act on the true principles of christian faith, to decide with firm

ness and act with vigour? And where is there a charm of such strong and holy power to prepare us for the business of christian duty, as habitually to bear in our thoughts that our God himself is our witness? What are the prospects which the world ~~can~~ offer compared with the approbation or displeasure of a present God? How can we allow ourselves to be shaken in our resolution by the applause or censure of our fellow-men, if we sincerely believe that these resolutions were inspired by God in our hearts when first they were formed, and that he continues to witness their fulfilment? Oh! how should it tend to exalt us in likeness to his own perfection, to maintain in our minds a sincere belief that his eye follows us every moment, that over every change of our character every moment he is watching! If to associate with the excellent ones of the earth be one of the best means to raise us to a resemblance to their purity, what must be the effect of communion with God himself? How can our eye be fixed on the perfections of his nature; how can our mind be filled with the contemplation of God, without feeling an earnest wish to resemble him?

Lastly, consider, I beseech you, the unspeakable *consolation* which is treasured up for us by the performance of this duty, "wherein we are called, therein to abide with God." Whatever of evil there may be in our cup shall we not drink it, when we know that we receive it from a Father's hand; when we can trust in his wisdom for

its usefulness; when we can trust in his mercy for our escape in his own appointed way? "God has given up his Son to the death for us, and will he not with him also freely give us all things?" It is only they who have been enabled savingly and personally to apply this truth, that know how much there is in it to hush every murmur and to disarm every fear! Do holy resolutions rise within us, which we imperfectly fulfil in practice? Do kind and charitable wishes glow within us, which adverse circumstances forbid us to realize to our fellow-men? Do pious thoughts embody themselves within us, which human language tries in vain to utter? How great is the consolation in such moments—the purposes of the heart are known to God! When our brethren condemn what is entitled to praise; when they crush by their censures a heart which sighs after the approbation which it labours to merit; when even they, from whom better and nobler things might be expected, combine in that reproach and scorn, how unutterable the consolation that even then the Lord seeth in secret, and that what he seeth in secret he will openly reward! When "our father and mother forsake us;" when the best of human attachments are broken, and there remaineth not one to comfort and to sustain; when "friend and brother are put far from us, and our acquaintance into darkness," how unspeakable the consolation that Almighty God remaineth, the Father and friend of all who trust in him!

GLASGOW:—W. R. M[‘] PHUN, PUBLISHER, 86, TRONGATE,

To whom all Communications should be addressed.

THE

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SATURDAY, 28TH JUNE, 1834.

No. 118. SERMON by the Rev. JOHN STEWART, Sorn. SERMON by the Rev. NATHANIEL PATERSON, Glasgow. LECTURE by the Very Rev. G. H. BAIRD, D.D., Edinburgh. Price :

THE LAW OF CHRISTIAN LOVE;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THE AFTERNOON OF SABBATH, 25th MAY, 1834, IN THE HIGH CHURCH, EDINBURGH, BEFORE HIS GRACE THE LORD HIGH COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,

By the Rev. JOHN STEWART,
Minister of Sorn.

· And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."—1 COR. xiii. 18.

THE Corinthians, to whom these words were in the first instance addressed, were eminently endowed by the Holy Spirit with miraculous gifts, which, however, they did not generally apply to the end for which they were bestowed, but perverted to the worst of purposes. Puffed up with these, and anxious on all occasions to make an exhibition of them, when they could advance their own private ends—when they could gain the applause and admiration of their brethren, they were pursuing a line of conduct which was not only detrimental to themselves, but detrimental also to the religion which they professed—which was endangering their own eternal welfare, and bringing discredit on the religion of Jesus.

Anxious to correct this fatal error on the part of the Corinthians—anxious to convince them of how little avail those spiritual gifts with which they were endowed, and on which they plumed themselves so much, were, unless accompanied with the characteristics of true piety, the Apostle, in the chapter from which the words of our text are taken, addresses to the Christians at Corinth a most interesting and impressive discourse upon the nature of charity or love, which he represents not only as more excellent and important, as more worthy of their attention and regard, than all those gifts of which they thought so highly, and about which there were so many contentions among them, but as the chief of all christian

graces; as one which should continue to be exercised when all other graces, when all other gifts, should have failed; and now abideth *faith, hope, charity*—or, as it should be rendered, *love*—these three; *but the greatest of these is love.*

In discoursing farther from these words, what we propose, in dependence on the blessing and assistance of God, is, in the *first place*, to point out the source from whence true charity or love springs—the foundation on which it rests; *secondly*, the manner in which true charity or love shows itself; and, *finally*, why charity or love is to be regarded as the chief of all the christian graces, as superior even to faith and hope.

I. Let us then, in the first place, endeavour to show you the source whence true charity or love springs. Love, in its most general and extensive sense in Scripture, implies not merely love to the brethren—a disposition to exercise all due benevolence to our fellow-mortals—to advance by all the means in our power their temporal and eternal welfare, but also love to God, and love to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. We may be possessed of a sort of instinctive benevolence—a constitutional tenderness of soul, which may often-times stimulate us to the performance of the most generous actions to our brethren—

to actions which may gain us the admiration of surrounding spectators, and fill our own souls with complacency and delight; but we can never be thoroughly, permanently kind to our brethren; we cannot feel towards them genuine love; we cannot be actuated by right principles, by pure disinterested motives, unless we be possessed of true love to God and to the Saviour. "By this," says an Apostle, "we know that we love the children of God, when we love God."

A question, however, here arises. Can a person, in his natural state, feel any thing like genuine love to his God and Saviour? Have we merely to bring before our view the perfections of the divine character, as these are displayed in the wonders of creation and providence, or as they are more clearly and explicitly revealed to us in God's holy Word, and forthwith experience the love of God springing up in our hearts? Oh! no, my brethren. We may feel some degree of gratitude to God for the bounties of his providence—for the protection which he is continually affording us from surrounding dangers—for the comforts which he is scattering in rich profusion around us, and yet all the while be utter strangers to the love of God—all the while regard his moral perfections, his holiness, and his justice, every thing on which these are stamped with aversion, with hatred and contempt. "The carnal mind," the Word of God says, "is enmity against God." In our natural state, instead of dwelling with complacency and delight on the glorious perfections of God, we rather try to banish God from our thoughts. Instead of God, at least the God of the Bible, being viewed by us as an object of love and affection, we view him with aversion, with fear, and with dread; or, in order to get quit of those feelings which a just view of the character of God, as he is revealed to us in his Word, cannot fail to awaken in our minds, we endeavour to rob him of the essential attributes of his nature, and to invest him with the weaknesses of humanity; we wish to regard him only as a merciful God, who is disposed to wink at iniquity, rather than as a holy and just God, who will by no means clear the guilty and impenitent sinner. But when the heart is renewed after the image of God—when all old things have passed away, and all things have become new—when we are brought from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto the living God, then we perceive a beauty and an excellence in the character of God, of which

we were previously unconscious; we regard with delight and with admiration those attributes which we formerly regarded with hatred and aversion; and not only so, but we perceive a beauty and an excellence, somewhat to love and admire, in every thing on which the image of God, his character and perfections, are stamped. The law of God, whose commands and sanctions we formerly regarded with the utmost aversion, whose restraints we felt to be irksome and painful in the extreme, we regard as holy, and just, and good; we delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man; we consider it as our meat and our drink, to do the will of our Father in heaven. Doubtless, my brethren, did we gain nothing by that spiritual discernment which in regeneration is produced, but clear and distinct views of the character and of the law of God, we should be so overwhelmed by a sense of our own unworthiness and guilt—we should feel ourselves so utterly unable by any efforts, by any exertions of ours, to regain the favour and friendship of God, that, instead of being capable of the exercise of love, we should sink into despair. But, along with those just views of the character and of the law of God, which the benign influence of the Holy Spirit produces upon our souls—along with the capability of perceiving and admiring what is really good and excellent in itself—along with those humbling views of the evil, the guilt, the number, the aggravation of our sins, which it awakens in our minds, we are brought to see in all its greatness, in all its suitableness and sufficiency to our necessities, that marvellous display of the divine perfections, that unparalleled manifestation of the goodness, and mercy, and love, as well as of the holiness and justice of God, which is exhibited in the scheme of our redemption—in the gift of his own Son, his equal in power and glory, as a ransom for the very chief of sinners. Here mercy and truth are seen meeting together, righteousness and peace kissing each other. Here God is exhibited as a just God and as a Saviour—as just, and yet justifying the ungodly. Here we behold the law of God magnified and made honourable, whilst the violators of that law are pardoned. Here we behold every thing calculated to awaken in our hearts the liveliest emotions of gratitude and love to our God and to our Saviour—every thing to stir us up to magnify and to praise his holy name—every thing to stimulate us to do that which we think would be pleasing in his sight, and to avoid that which we think

may be hateful to him. Here we behold that which must induce us to adopt the language of the Apostle, and to exclaim with him, "Lord, what wouldest thou have us to do?" or, with the Psalmist, "What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits?"

Now, this love, which just views of the character of God—which just views more especially of that striking display of his perfections which we have in the gospel scheme of salvation—which an interest in that scheme of salvation must of necessity awaken towards God—which attracts the soul towards him—which leads us to fix our affections upon him as the centre of all excellency and the source of all blessedness, to delight in him as our chief good, and to seek on all occasions to do his holy will—must necessarily be awakened in a peculiar manner towards the Lord Jesus, not only on account of all that he did and suffered for us, but also on account of the marvellous display of the divine perfections which he exhibited—on account of his being the image of the invisible God, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And while we contemplate, while we meditate with admiring gratitude and love on the glorious perfections of the Godhead, as these are manifested in the person of the Lord Jesus, we shall be led to imbibe his Spirit and to learn of him; we shall be "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord;" we shall take delight to do his holy will; we shall study to keep his commandments; we shall endeavour to imitate him in all his imitable perfections, in his piety towards God, in his patience under suffering, in his unbounded love and charity towards man—who, when he "was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered, threatened not;" who wept, who prayed, who died for his most inveterate and determined enemies, his persecutors and his murderers; who went about continually doing good both to the souls and to the bodies of men.

II. But this naturally leads us to the second particular to which we proposed to direct your attention, viz., to show you the manner in which true charity or love shows itself. Love to God, my brethren, love to him as our reconciled God and Father in Jesus Christ, must be the ruling principle in the heart of every true child of God, of every regenerate person, of every genuine disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ; but, wherever true love to God exists, it follows as a necessary consequence that there must be love to the brethren. In fact, love to

the brethren is the evidence, the test, the proof, of our love to God, of our regeneration, of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the best evidence we can have; for it is one that we can better subject to a constant and impartial examination than any other; it is the best evidence we can have of grace reigning predominant in our souls, of our proud, carnal, selfish dispositions having been subdued, of our having been with Jesus, of our being his disciples. It is the evidence by which our character shall be tried on the great day of account. "By this," says our blessed Lord, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye love one another." "We know," saith St. John, "that we have passed from death to life," because we love the brethren. If a man say, "I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen." And this commandment we have from him, "that he who loveth God, love his brother also." "But whoso," saith St. James, "hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

It is a very prevalent opinion, however, with many, that love to the brethren, or charity, consists mainly and chiefly in the distribution of alms, in relieving the wants, in soothing the sorrows and afflictions of the poor and of the distressed; and that if there be this exhibition of charity or love, it is enough; it matters not though all the other characteristics of it be wanting. The distribution of alms, the soothing of the sorrows and afflictions of the poor, though a part—a very prominent and necessary part of christian charity, is but a part, yea, may be attended to without a single spark of true love to the brethren; without a spark of that charity which the Apostle, in the words of our text, so highly extols and so strongly enforces, existing in the mind. Hence you find the Apostle, in the 3d verse of this chapter, expressing himself thus: "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." If we be under the influence of this divine principle of love, we shall exhibit it in a great variety of ways and on many occasions. Should our good offices be required by ingratitude—should we be injured or provoked, we shall not immediately retaliate; we shall not seek revenge; we shall not

brood over the offence, magnify its criminality, refuse reconciliation, unless on the most humiliating terms, unless at the expense of a brother's blood. We shall remember how much has been forgiven us, how long God has been with us, how willing he is for Christ's sake to pardon our numerous and aggravated offences, and be ready to pass by the offences of a brother, to forgive him even though he should have offended us seventy times seven; nay, we shall even be kind to him, and endeavour to overcome evil with good; we shall take delight in going about doing good to all men, as we may have opportunity, though more especially to them that are of the household of faith. If a brother be suffering under the privations of want, we shall certainly, in imitation of Him who never looked on human suffering but his heart melted with sympathy and his arm was stretched out to save, be ready to render all the relief in our power. If a brother be smarting under the bereavements of life, and refusing to be comforted, we shall, like the friends of the ancient patriarch, sit down by him and weep. Should he be suffering under the spiritual leprosy of sin, be ensnared in its galling bondage, we shall endeavour, by every means which love can suggest or prudence dictate, to persuade him to avail himself of the remedy which is provided, to urge him to flee for refuge, and to lay hold on the hope set before him in the Gospel; for love "suffereth long, and is kind."

Should a brother be elevated above us in rank or in station—should he have outstripped us in the journey of life—should his enterprizes have been crowned with success, while we have been subjected to adversity, to difficulties, to disappointments, to poverty, we shall not be envious or jealous of him; we shall not wish to see him hurled from the eminence on which he stands, deprived of the comforts which he enjoys, and put on a level with ourselves: no, brethren, for love "envieth not." Should we be invested with power and authority over others, we shall not exert it in a haughty, domineering, rash, insolent manner, but with all the leniency, with all the tenderness in our power—with all the leniency, with all the tenderness which is consistent with a sense of duty—with a due regard to the feelings of those who may be under us; for love "vaunteth not itself."

Should we be possessed of talents of a high order; should we be raised to eminence and distinction—to a situation which

brings us much into notice—where we may have an opportunity of gaining the applause and admiration of our brethren, and when, by discharging well the duties of our station, we do gain the applause and admiration of our brethren, we shall not be uplifted—we shall not be puffed up with self-conceit and vanity, but remember that God, and God alone, is the giver of every good and of every perfect gift: that it is to him we are indebted for all our talents and endowments; that it is he who makes us to differ from others, and that his favour, and not the praise of men, is to be the great object we are to keep continually in view, for love "is not puffed up." Should we be in a public or in a private station; should we be invested with authority or be under authority; should we be young, or should we be old; should we be parents, or should we be children; should we be ministers, or should we be people—we shall never forget that there is a conduct becoming our profession, our rank, our station, our years, our circumstances; and that conduct, if we be under the influence of this divine principle of love, we shall endeavour to maintain; for love "doth not behave itself unseemly." In discharging the duties of our calling, or in our intercourse with the world, our own interest, our own ease, our own selfish gratifications, will ever be made secondary considerations—will ever be pursued in subservience to the glory of God, and the dearest and best interests of our fellow-men; for love "seeketh not her own." Should men behave unkindly to us, should they seem to offer insults to us, should they express themselves unwarantly or unjustly of our characters or conduct, we shall not be rash in taking offence at their behaviour; we shall not be rash in manifesting our displeasure at them, in giving vent to the language of passion; for love "is not easily provoked." In cases where a doubt exists as to the motives by which men are actuated, we shall at least put the best construction on their conduct which it will bear; we shall not do as too many are apt to do, give a ready ear to slanderous and malicious reports, and take a malignant pleasure in speaking evil of our neighbours—but will rather extenuate and conceal their faults when we can do so conscientiously; for love "thinketh no evil." Should an adversary or a rival, one whose views are at variance with ours, have been overtaken in a fault, or have been led to the commission of a crime which shall blast his reputation and ruin his prospects in the world, we shall not, like the malevolent and

hard-hearted, take pleasure in his fall, but shall rather be disposed to weep over his unhappy fate ; for love " rejoiceth not in iniquity." Should we see the cause of truth, of God, and of religion, prospering in the world ; should we see those who are ranked among the children of God maintaining a holy and consistent walk and conversation, adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour ; should we see those whose characters have been aspersed—against whom the shafts of calumny have been directed, vindicating their characters, and rising superior to the malice of their enemies—our spirits will be cheered, our hearts gladdened, for love " rejoiceth in the truth." Should a brother either intentionally or accidentally do that which is reprehensible, which we think he ought not to have done, we shall not blazon abroad his fault, but in so far as we can lawfully, as a regard to the law of God, the interests of society, or of the individual himself, will allow us, we shall cover, we shall throw a vail over that which he hath done amiss ; for love " beareth all things." Should an individual be accused without any clear evidence ; should something of a serious nature be laid to his charge which he resolutely denies ; or should he have actually done wrong, and state many things in extenuation of his conduct ; should he express sorrow and contrition for what he has done amiss, and promise to amend his ways for the future, we shall willingly give credit to his integrity and veracity ; for love " believeth all things."

Should an individual have wandered far from the path of duty ; should his habits appear to be of the worst description ; should he have sunk into the lowest state of profligacy and of vice—we shall not give him up for lost—we shall not pass upon him the sentence of condemnation, but persevere with unwearied assiduity in the use of appointed means to rescue him, if possible, from the danger by which he is encompassed from the ruin which lies before him ; and never, while there is life, shall we despair entirely of success ; for love " hopeth all things." Should God call upon us to suffer in his service ; should trials, difficulties, sorrows, distresses, temptations, poverty, reproach, persecution, even death be our portion, we shall be patient, submissive, resigned, we shall count not even our own lives dear unto ourselves, so as that we may finish our course with joy ; for love " endureth all things."

Nor is this a grace which shall continue in existence only a limited period of time.

It is a grace which, when once it has been implanted and has taken root in the soul, shall continue to grow and continue to flourish—shall continue to advance rapidly onward to maturity. It is a grace whose value, whose importance shall never diminish, and that for the best of all reasons ; because, when all other graces, when all other gifts shall have ceased—shall be of no more avail, " Love shall continue in active operation ; it shall triumph even over death itself ; it shall accompany the soul to the mansions of eternal blessedness, and shall adorn it throughout the endless ages of eternity ; " for love never faileth, but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail ; whether there be tongues, they shall cease ; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three ; but the greatest of these is love."

III. But this brings us to the third particular to which we proposed to direct your attention, viz., to show you why love is to be regarded as the greatest of all the christian graces—as superior even to faith and hope. Although the Apostle in the passage under consideration states, that *love* is superior to faith and hope, he does not in the smallest degree underrate those graces ; he does not give us the slightest ground for calling in question the truth of any one of those many passages of Sacred Scripture where they are spoken of as indispensably necessary to constitute a title to discipleship, to entitle us to be ranked among the faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

Without faith, this same Apostle says, it is impossible to please God : " By grace are ye saved through faith, therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law ; therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Nor can any one reflect for a moment on these, and many other similar passages that might be quoted from the Word of God, and yet venture to maintain that he can escape the wrath to come—that he can regain the divine favour—that he can expect any share in the benefits and blessings of the new covenant, without faith ; nay, that without faith he can have either love to God, love to the Saviour, or love to the brethren. It is faith which brings us into reconciliation with God, which frees us from the condemnatory sentence of the law, which enables us to regard God as our Father and our friend, as an object of love and of affection, instead of regarding him with aversion, as an object of fear and of dread ; and, therefore,

faith must be considered to be the foundation of that love to God, and of that love to the Lord Jesus Christ, from whence all true love to the brethren must spring. Without faith we can have no interest in the Gospel scheme of salvation, we must continue subject to the wrath of the Almighty, liable to all the consequences of unpardoned guilt, strangers to that peace of God which passeth understanding, strangers to that perfect love which casteth out fear—the victims of remorse, of misery and despair. Without faith in the sure testimony of God, a firm belief in all that he has revealed to us in his holy Word, we could derive no comfort from these exceeding great and precious promises—these promises of support and of strength in every time of need—in the hour of difficulty and of trial; those promises of honour and immortal glory in which the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ abounds; “for faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” When faith, however, has been implanted in the soul, then not only is there a cordial reception of the Lord Jesus Christ in all his offices, an entire and absolute resting upon him for salvation, for deliverance from sin and its consequences; but there is an unshaken confidence in all the promises of God’s Holy Word, an experimental, a realizing conviction of their truth; such an experimental, such a realizing conviction of their truth, as gives a present subsistence in the mind to the things that are promised, as fills the soul with hope and with confidence, when to the eye of the superficial observer, when to the eye of the worldling, all seems a dreary desolation, all seems darkness and despair. Thus faith in an unseen, but ever present, all powerful and reconciled God—faith in an almighty and compassionate High Priest, who has made a full and sufficient atonement for sin, who knows our frailty and our frame, who will not suffer us to be tried above what we are able to bear, who though absent in body, yet in spirit is ever nigh to all who call upon him—who call upon him in sincerity and in truth; faith in the glory hereafter to be revealed in the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, gives birth to that *Hope* which in the hour of difficulty and of trial, when worldly comforts fail, when sickness, when distress, when bereavements come upon us, when reproaches, when persecution, when death encompasseth us—proves an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, enables us to preserve that

sweet serenity, that undisturbed tranquillity, which no change of outward circumstances, no worldly advantages could possibly impart.

Yet excellent, my brethren, as these graces of faith and hope are, much as they are to be desired by every child of Adam, essential and indispensable as they are in the constitution of the christian character—superior as they may be to all earthly gifts, all earthly attainments, they are still to be regarded as inferior to *love*. And why? Not because love could exist without faith and hope, not because love could perform the offices of faith and hope, but because it is a higher attainment than either the one or the other; because it is a grace which shall continue to be exercised when faith and hope shall no longer be necessary—when faith shall have terminated in vision, hope in enjoyment. Faith and hope are the means by which creatures who were in a state of enmity with God, who were wrapt up in their own selfishness, are brought into friendship with God; are brought to love God as a reconciled God; are brought to view all mankind, more especially those who are of the household of faith, as their brethren, and to regard them with that love and affection which are becoming in children of one family, heirs of one inheritance, expectants of the same immortality. And, inasmuch as the end is to be considered as more valuable, more important, than the means employed in order to the obtaining of that end, so love, the end to be accomplished by faith and hope, is to be regarded as infinitely more valuable, infinitely more worthy of our admiration, than either faith or hope. They (to use the words of another) are the scaffolding, without which the building cannot be erected, yet the building is more valuable than the scaffolding, and when that is completed, the other will be taken down as of no farther use. Faith and hope will and must continue in lively and vigorous exercise till the last awful struggle of mortality be over, till that bright and glorious scene, which lies beyond death and the grave, bursts full upon our view. Then, however, they are no longer necessary; then they cease to be exercised; their services are no longer required, but *love*, that plant of heavenly origin, the seeds of which must be sown here, whose growth may have been stunted on earth by the workings of latent corruption, of carnal appetites and passions, of selfish and momentary gratifications, shall grow up and flourish in heaven its native soil. There it shall con-

stitute the ruling, the predominating, we may say, the only principle of action. There it shall be the link which shall bind together in a bond never to be dissolved, in perfect harmony, in uninterrupted felicity, the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem—the innumerable company of angels, the spirits of the just made perfect, Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and God the Judge of all. Hence it is easy to see why the sacred writers uniformly give this grace of love the pre-eminence over all other graces—over all other gifts; why it is they speak of love as the bond of perfection, as the fulfilling of the law, as the end of the commandment, as the evidence of our regeneration, of our being born of God. Hence it is you find them giving utterance to such emphatic language as the following:—“Love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God; he that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him; nothing availeth in Christ Jesus but faith which worketh by love. And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

What an inestimable grace, then, my christian friends, is love, and what a delightful, what a cheering, aspect would the face of creation exhibit if it were universally prevalent? Instead of that wretchedness which results from the indulgence of our selfish passions—instead of seeing men employing every craft which subtlety can suggest to take advantage of their brethren, exhibiting the utmost indifference to their

temporal and spiritual condition—instead of finding one set of men magnifying the failings and detracting from the excellencies of others, we should find every one as anxious about promoting the welfare of others as about his own, avoiding every gratification or indulgence which might interfere with his neighbour’s peace and happiness, exhibiting the tenderest sympathy for their sufferings, the liveliest interest in their spiritual welfare, judging charitably of all their actions, and dwelling more on his own imperfections than on theirs. Thus would the name of our God and Saviour be glorified, the transcendent excellence of our holy religion be manifest, and rapid progress be made towards that happy period foretold by the ancient prophet, “when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together: when the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all God’s holy mountain; for “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

O that God would implant this divine principle of love in the hearts of every one of us, that we may all be rooted and grounded in love—that our love may abound yet more and more in all knowledge and in all judgment, and thus have an evidence in ourselves that we are among the children of God, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. And now may the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

SELF-DENIAL;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THE FIRST SABBATH AFTER THE COMMUNION,

By the Rev. NATHANIEL PATERSON,

Minister of St. Andrew’s Church, Glasgow.

(SLIGHTLY ABRIDGED.)

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.”—MATTHEW xvi. 24.

We presume that, immediately after the vows of a communion table, your great desire is to follow on in your christian course; and, therefore, we farther presume that you will perceive the suitableness, on the present occasion, of these words which contain the law of christian discipleship, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.” It may contribute to the clearing of the passage now read, if we consider the occasion on which the words were spoken. We read that our Lord “from that time

forth began to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” From that time he began to show this; and till the close of his life he continued to give many indications both of his latter end and of the purposes it should serve. But Peter hearing this, took our Lord in task, and began to rebuke him, saying, “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.” We

may suppose that upon this occasion there might have been some mixture of motive; that the selfish part of the motive would be, Why go to Jerusalem and be killed, and abandon us who have left all and followed thee? But we may suppose another and more disinterested motive. If thou foreknowest what shall befall thee, then, why go to Jerusalem and be killed, and break our hearts by the loss of one for whom we are willing to die? Whatever the motive might be, you perceive that our Lord was angry with the expostulation of Peter, and answered him in terms very unlike his usual mildness of manner. He turned unto Peter and said, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Thus you perceive that our Lord replied to Peter in terms equally unwonted and severe; and some may be inclined to wonder that our Lord should have used such harsh language to a disciple whom he really loved; but you perceive that Peter took upon him the character of the great tempter, his purpose being to deter our Lord from the great end of all that grace and love he came down from heaven to accomplish. Having thus reproved Peter, our Lord turned to the rest of the disciples and showed them, that as he suffered so they must suffer, and that as he must needs go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things, so they must endure whatever it should be the Lord's will to appoint; and, accordingly, this is laid down as the rule of discipleship: this must be their law, these the terms to which they must come, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." And as the law is evidently to suffer, our Lord supports it with strong reasons whereby to engage and encourage us to come up to these terms in being genuine disciples: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." There is no contradiction in the terms here used, for they are applied in two different senses, and the meaning is, that if any man will seek to save this present mortal and miserable life at the expense of making shipwreck of faith, then he shall lose the life that is eternal; and what does he know but he shall lose this life, too; for he does not hold one breath of it by his own power. We trust that you will gain something for the right understanding of the text by this contextual view, and you cannot fail to gather from it these particulars: first of all from the case of Peter, that it is not of

man's nature to love any law by which suffering is rendered necessary, and yet we may learn by our Lord's anger, that if this our nature shall not be changed, we are a rock of offence to the Lord whom we profess to serve. You are to learn, also, by every argument our Lord uses, that it is a thing of life and death. There is no exception. If any man will come after Christ, this must be his rule: he must deny himself and take up his cross; and if he should refuse these terms, what will be the consequence? That while labouring to seek the life which is, he shall certainly lose that which is eternal in the kingdom of the Father; for this same Lord will come in the glory of his Father and of his holy angels, and will then render to every man according to his deeds; and this is enforced by the awful consideration, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul!" Thus you perceive that nothing must be so interesting at this moment, as to consider this law of christian discipleship, that we may be approved of the Lord from this present time, and not cast away when he shall come in the glory of his Father. This is the law, "If we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us." We proceed, then, with self-denial, the first and great part of christian discipleship, and that without which no disciple will ever so much as touch with one of his fingers the cross he is called to bear, or ever take one step in the path the Saviour has trod; it is that which will make all others easy, and without which neither will the cross be carried nor the path be trod. Let us, then, expound this law and set it before you, and then you will see it your interest to inquire whether you have made this law your own.

What, then, are the several degrees of the self-denial of the Christian? To begin with the lowest, we say it is the humbling of the disciple, that the Saviour may be preferred. You will see the meaning of this by what is said to the disciples in regard to how they should act one to another. They are reminded, that to love the uppermost seats in the synagogues and greetings in the markets ill became the servants of the Lord. Now, if such be the rule with regard to Christ's disciples to one another, how much more must it be the rule with regard to Him whose we are, and whom we serve. The words are, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." We must give the Lord the preference; we

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

must come after him, that is, we must set the Lord before us, and for this reason :—"I am the way, and the truth, and the life, and no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." And if we come not after him, we go before him ; we will come unto God by another way than that provided, and the whole of this is a deceitful and impious imagination. Therefore, we must be humble, and exercise self-denial, that the Saviour may be exalted ; we must set the Lord before us, and come after him, depending on him for that truth which shall be our guide, and that access which is made through his own blood, he dying, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God. Such, then, is the lowest and simplest view of the self-denial of a Christian ; but it must go farther than this, we must know the declaration of God which most nearly concerns every one of us. We were lost, we were undone, and we were yet without strength, and in due time Christ died for the ungodly. We are the enemies of God by wicked works ; and, therefore, must not only set the Lord before us, being ourselves humbled that he may be exalted, but must see ourselves as nothing, that the Lord may be all. We must be born again ; we must be raised from spiritual deadness to newness of life ; we must be created again unto good works ; and, if all this can only be by the power of God, surely we must see ourselves as nothing that the Saviour may be all. This is, indeed, the least, and humblest, and lowest degree of humiliation ; but we are not only to see ourselves as lost, without strength, and enemies of God, but to see ourselves as condemned ; and it is only when we rejoice in the righteous sentence of God that we come to the last degree of self-denial which is essential to the christian profession. If we were only in this lost state, and without strength, and the enemies of God, we might be contented to remain as we are ; but sentence of condemnation has passed, and we are pronounced the children of wrath, and it is only because we cannot abide the fiery indignation which will dwell with everlasting burnings ; it is because we are ourselves nothing, but yet more because we cannot endure the sentence which a righteous God has pronounced, that we are brought to the true humbling of spirit which is necessary to the exalting of the Saviour, and then we say, Lord deliver us. And it is only when we are brought to a sense of all our danger and of all our misery that we have a heart to feel that grace and love manifested in Christ, in which we are taken

from a pinnacle and our feet set upon a rock, and our going established towards that place where we shall behold the face of God in righteousness.

Having considered the several degrees of that humiliation which is intimated in the self-denial of the Christian, we observe that it is precisely the same in all men ; therefore we say, that high birth, great accomplishments, splendid talents and wisdom, or the effecting of grand achievements, or whatever may distinguish men more than the virtues we admire, constitute no exception ; the law has no exception :—"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." It is the same to all, and in all these several circumstances ; for, if all must say we have no life in ourselves, we have justly come under righteous condemnation, and we cannot live in ourselves, then there is not in all these virtues or several acquirements, or in those things the world would admire, any thing that shall give us a standing-place in this world, or a claim to the favour of God, which is better than life.

We have farther to state, that it must be universal with regard to each man. As it is the same to all men, it must be universal with regard to all things in each man. We say, then, that it respects soul and body—that it respects the understanding, the will, and the affections, all that we naturally are, and all that we would naturally do, and then this delivers us from the vain imagination of many, when they say, It is right we should be called upon to correct our principles ; it is right we should cast off vicious habits ; it is right we should be on our guard against an evil propensity ; but no one of these, or all of these put together, will suffice. Look to the text ; it is utterly impossible to understand the term, self-denial, in any other sense than this ; it is not speaking of vicious propensity, or a growing propensity, or any one besetting sin, but take notice that a man's self must be denied, and this is comprehensive. Now, you may just observe that the understanding is darkened, the world knoweth not God ; and so long as we lean to our own understandings, we cannot listen to the teaching of Him who teacheth savingly and to profit ; and if there be no light in the understanding, how must the will be our guide ? The will of man is adverse to God and prone to evil, and, therefore, cannot be our guide ; yea, and if the Saviour came not to do his own will, and if he be our Lord, how should our will be our law ; and if the understanding be darkened, and the will averse to God, how should the

desires and the affections of the heart be such as to guide us to heaven? They all lean the contrary way; they all correspond to the appearance of evil; and, therefore we say, we must not lean to our own understandings, neither shall we trust to the desires of our hearts; we must deny ourselves in all these things, and it is impossible to make the terms more comprehensive than they are in the text. Now, if you see the proper expansion of the thing, remember that it is this self that must be denied. I am aware of the objections that are made to this view of the matter. We may meet with those who, looking to a heathen land, ask, Did we never observe one virtue flourish there? was there no parental affection, no filial devotedness? was there to be seen no patriotism, no magnificent benevolence? We will not deny this; but then consider what was the character of man. He was an idolator; he retained not the knowledge of God in his heart; he was corrupt, debased by the grossest of all vices; and nothing unholy can enter the kingdom of heaven. We would just make the same answer to those who plead in a christian country, Is there nothing good? nothing but what must be denied? They will just appeal to the very same virtues as distinguished the heathen. We acknowledge them virtues, but not to save the soul; for if the heart still be enmity against God, and if nothing unholy can enter the kingdom of heaven, then we say, that the soul can have no acceptance with God; and we cannot but reckon all the virtues of professing Christians with those of the heathen, unless they be really in the Spirit of Christ. Let us look, then, to the matter of fact, and we will see it to be no nonsense that we insist upon, the universality of the law; for if there be better things than those described; if there be higher attainments in holiness, and greater fervour of spirit, greater glorifying of God, then we say, in what is this described? "I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I but the grace of God, which was in me. By the grace of God I am what I am." And the true christian spirit is thus, by the grace of God, all sufficient, growing in conformity to the divine will; but what will the will do? He is levelling down the old man, that he may build up the new—crucifying the old man with its affections and lusts—putting off the old man, he is created in righteousness, and knowledge, and true holiness, and thus is denying himself to the lowest degree and the last moment of life; and in proportion

as self is denied and debased, the spiritual man is growing up to the stature of Christ; and, therefore, the last act of the renewed soul is one of humility, and then it is that, being humbled, he is exalted in due time. But self-denial is a sore thing to practise, for men love to indulge their passions. It is just, however, by bringing self down that Jesus Christ can be received into our hearts as the hope of glory—and this is the wisdom of the law; it brings down self which has so many conflicting passions. This self must be brought down, that Christ may reign in our hearts as the hope of glory; and since Christ cannot be admitted into our hearts, unless self be denied, there is no other rule by which we can keep our hearts humble and glory in the service of God. I trust you are all now prepared to ask your hearts whether you have denied yourselves as Christians. I have put the question in a momentous manner, because the law is stated in our text as universal. If we do not deny ourselves, we certainly shall not take up the cross. Therefore, the question is momentous; and for this reason it is momentous at this very moment, that the "Lord will come in the glory of his Father, and will render unto all men according to their deeds;" and, in this manner, if we deny him, he will deny us. And how is the question to be solved? Just by looking to all the breadth and length of the law of self-denial. As now set before you, you have seen that it respects all things in the whole natural man, and respects all men and every rank and condition of life; and as you now understand the nature of the law, so you have it in your power to apply that law to your own spiritual state, and judge whether you have yet begun this self-denial so necessary to the bearing of the cross and the following of Christ.

I cannot finish the subject without something more particular. I would say, then, that you may judge of this self-denial by the manner in which you have begun this Lord's day. Let me ask, then, how you have begun this day? God has preserved you through the night; God only can preserve you through the day, and bless the labours of that day; therefore, the first duty in the morning is to remember the Lord your preserver—the greatest of all duties is to commit yourselves to your Lord and preserver—the greatest of all obligations you can feel is to live unto Him who died for you and rose again; and, therefore, we say that the manner in which you begin any one day of your life, may be

ust taken as a test how far you deny yourselves. If the first of all duties and the strongest of all obligations be to acknowledge God when you awake, you may judge what hinders you. Perhaps sloth, a little more sleep, a little more slumber, or an unwillingness to have the spirit ruffled, choosing rather to live in carnal security. If these be sufficient to make you not acknowledge your Lord, your Maker, your Redeemer, you deny yourselves in nothing. Just mark how the day is spent; it is spent in all active pursuits; but is God remembered? Is the work carried on as becomes those who must give an account? If God be not acknowledged in all your ways, it is plain you are serving another God; and if the God of this lower world engrosses your hearts, we are bound to declare that God is not in all your thoughts, and there has some temptation come in the way. If some temptation has come in the way, and you yield, for example, to surfeiting and drunkenness, then I must say, that you deny yourselves in nothing.

I am aware it will be said by some, we have taken care of the Sabbath; but that may be to show a good example or gain reputation; we have abandoned the crime of profane

swearing, but that is a vice to which no respectable person is *addicted*, others say they are temperate, who, from their constitutions, cannot bear intemperance. We speak not against the improvement itself, but God judges not merely the improvement but the motive; and I say, lastly, that if your self-denial be that of our text, it will be known by its motive; if your self-denial be for the Lord's sake, who died that you might live, then he will know it. You will be able to judge of your denial by its motive, and if the motive be right, your self-denial will be known by its consequences. You will see that all sin is that abominable thing that the Lord hates. Shall I do this wickedness and sin against God? Shall I, to gratify a passion, crucify the Lord that bought me? If your self-denial be that of our text, you will know it by its perseverance. It is to bring you to heaven, and you must continue the denial of self till the spiritual man attain to the measure of the fulness of Christ; and it is just when you have come to the lowest of this self-denial that you come to that meetness which shall raise you in due time. May God bless his Word, and to his name be all the praise! Amen.

THE THIRD PETITION;*

FROM A LECTURE ON OUR LORD'S PRAYER,

By the Very Rev. G. H. BAIRD, D.D.,

Senior Minister of the High Church, Edinburgh, and Principal of the University.

"Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth."—LUKE xi. 2.

It is not enough that the kingdom of God be established among men in the purity of external forms and external appearances. No. To produce its intended effect, it must come in the power of righteousness and sanctification; therefore, in this petition, we are required to pray that the will of God may "be done as in heaven, so in earth." Now, in one sense of the phrase, the will of God is executed without interruption by all the creatures he has made. The laws of his natural government execute themselves—in so far as they are concerned, "he doth according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth." But, then, the laws of his moral government are made to depend for their execution on the choice of rational agents; and with respect to them, alas! our guilty race have furnished a miserable example of resistance and of rebellion. Yet!

forsaking our duties and our happiness, we have brought confusion and wretchedness by our guilt into the creation of God, and have been justly liable to the reproofs of his word and to its threatened punishments. Now, to recall us from this state of wretchedness and of guilt, is the great purpose of all the dispensations of Providence towards man, and it becomes us to co-operate with the merciful designs of Providence to do good that we may be happy, and to pray with sincerity and earnestness, that the will of God may be done as in heaven, so in earth. Now, the will of God in this petition, signifies either the duties he requires us to perform, or the sufferings which he calls us to endure. These are both parts of that discipline which he has appointed as instrumental means in restoring us to the perfection of our nature, and to the happiness connected with that perfection. It ought,

* For the first and second Petitions, see No. 115, p. 419.

Therefore, to be our constant endeavour, each in his own place, that in both these respects, in the fulfilment of duty and the endurance of trials, our wills should be made conformable to the will of God. When he appoints us the rod of chastisement and visits us with affliction, we are to regard our sorrows as the will of our Father in heaven, who loves us and permits nothing to befall us but what is meant ultimately and essentially to advance our good. It becomes us to say with pious resignation, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth." When he calls us to labour in his service, when he calls us to relieve, according to our ability, our brethren, when he calls us to mortify our irregular passions, we should be ready to comply with the same cheerfulness and alacrity as the angels who fulfil his commandments and do his pleasure, hearkening unto the voice of his Word; not that we can hope to equal the perfection of these exalted beings, but this we are to do in our place in society and with our powers, to endeavour that our obedience may be, in proportion to our nature and ability, as complete as that of the angels is in proportion to theirs, that is, like theirs, universal, and steady, and sincere, free from admixture of unhallowed motives, and approaching nearer and nearer to perfection. We are to pray that God being great, may give effect to the doctrines of his Gospel, that the dominion of sin may be destroyed from earth, and that the period may speedily arrive when God shall behold with delight the restoration of his fallen race, and suffer nothing to offend in his holy mountain.

But to conclude, let us, oh! my brethren, never forget that in preferring the petitions to which I have called your attention in particular in preferring this, there is virtually implied a solemn obligation on him who prefers it, (now that there is a pledge promised by him before God,) that he will endeavour to contribute in his own person and in his own conduct to hasten the holy period for which he has appealed. I ask you, what of soundness or reason there would be in the petition, "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth," were we not im-

pressed at times with the ties that bind us, and at times cherishing the purpose ourselves to do that will? Without being thus accompanied, the petition would be in our lips a palpable mark of an act of foolishness, or rather of an hypocritical mockery of God. What would be the feelings of a father to that son whose lips were extolling the duty of pious filial obedience, and urging it on others, but who yet lived himself habitually in reckless waywardness, manifesting in his looks, and words, and acts, disregard of parental authority? What would be the feelings of an earthly father towards that son who thus by an example in opposition to his profession, was acting a part so totally contradictory to his profession, in thus debasing the domestic holiness of the house in which he lived, while he was exhorting others to act in a manner quite the reverse? What would be the feelings of such a father, but profound regret and indignant disapprobation of his son's glaring inconsistency and most culpable and base conduct? Oh! do then, my professing christian brethren, beware of awakening by a similar conduct, similar feelings in your Father who is in heaven. When you offer the petition, "As in heaven, so in earth, thy will be done," make it your business to consecrate your hearts and lives to do his will. If you act otherwise, know that the deserved wrath of his omnipotence impends over you; and, oh! remember that it is a fearful thing indeed to fall into the hands of the offended living God. Every time, therefore, you pronounce the petitions, "Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth;" every time you pronounce these petitions—every time you accord with their pronunciation in the sanctuary, let your present conscious aspirations rise to heaven in the language, "Deepen, heavenly Father, in my conscience and heart the impression, the personal obligation of preferring these petitions before thee. And, oh! grant that, enabled by thy grace, doing thy will, hallowing thy name, and contributing to promote the coming of thy kingdom, I may be found at last to do thy will in heaven among angels and perfect spirits who through eternity shall adore thee."

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To whom all Communications should be addressed.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 5TH JULY, 1834.

119. SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT NEWTON, Manchester.
SERMON by the Rev. ALEXANDER S. PATTERSON, Falkirk.

CHRIST THE SAVIOUR OF SINNERS;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE METHODIST CHAPEL, ABERDEEN, JUNE 22d, 1831,

By the Rev. ROBERT NEWTON,
Of Manchester.

“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”—I TIMOTHY i. 15.

I KNOW not, if I were to search the whole Inspired Volume, if I should find any other text in it at once so plain and so important, so concise, and yet so comprehensive as the one which I have just read. It contains a brief summary of the whole scheme of gospel salvation and of evangelical truth—an epitome of general Christianity reduced to its very essence. The text contains all that is essential for sinners to believe, in order to realize their happiness both present and eternal. It applies to all who own the character of sinner as belonging to them. And who is there that does not own the character of sinner? Who is there that has not sinned? If there be any individual within these walls prepared to deny that the character of sinner applies to him; if there be any one prepared to affirm that he is not a sinner, and to substantiate by reasons what he says—then I have nothing to say to him—he has no interest in the religion of Jesus Christ, for his religion is emphatically a religion for sinners and for none but sinners. But if I look around me for one who has not sinned, I look in vain, for there breathes not under this roof—there exists not any where one being of Adam’s race who has not sinned, for all are sinners, and all the world is guilty before God. And it is because men are sinners that they need

a Saviour, nor can the salvation of God have any thing to do with them but as fallen and sinful creatures. It is only as sinners that men can approach to God, for the man who would come in any other character would come with a lie in his mouth. But although man has sinned, the text announces a Saviour—“ Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Behold, then, glad tidings of great joy! If you ask for what purpose Christ came into the world; if you ask, as well you may, who it was that shed his blood that sinners might obtain salvation; there is evidence that he was the divine person spoken of under the Mosaic law, and by the prophets—“ Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;” this saying is not doubtful, for we have the words of the Apostle that it is a faithful saying: “ This is a faithful saying.” We might dwell largely upon this view, but we wish to compress the subject, by remarking what the saying is which is recorded, and in what light it is to be regarded as a true saying; and may He in whose name we are met vouchsafe his blessing to our endeavours.

Mark, then, that the saying here recorded is to be regarded as of most astonishing interest—it calls forth the astonishment of angelic minds; but sinners are most imme-

dately interested, for "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. We are first called to the consideration of what person it was that came into the world.

He is here described in terms expressive of his mediatorial office of Christ; but although thus described here, yet I may remark, that in other places of Scripture he is described in terms which apply to the supreme and absolute Deity—the great God even our Saviour—the only wise God—and, moreover, as the true God and eternal life. My friends, you are all aware that the preacher cannot enter at large into this subject, but I may take the opportunity of affirming, that after the most careful examination of the Scriptures, the conviction on my mind is, that there is not one title, not one operation, or one act of worship belonging to the omnipotent and absolute Deity, that is not, in Scripture, ascribed to Jesus Christ. And, indeed, were he any other being than the Most High—were he a creature—however lofty and however exalted, but still a creature—the Saviour of mankind he could not be. But in the economy of our common Christianity, the Author of our salvation is God over all blessed for ever more. Here he is called Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed, the great High Priest, who, after offering up himself as an atonement for the sins of mankind, entered, not into the holy place made with hands, but into the heaven of heavens, where he sits as the King of saints and the Lord of glory. He is King on the holy hill of Zion, where he rules and reigns, and will reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his foot-stool. He is called Jesus—the character, name, and office accorded to him by the angel: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Jesus!—name dear to sinners!—the name by which he is given to sinners—a name that ought to vibrate like music in the ears of sinners; for this is the only name under heaven by which men can be saved. He who is the first and the last, the great Alpha and Omega, came into the world to save sinners. He that was from the beginning God, the eternal Word was made flesh and tabernacled amongst us, and we beheld his glory. He came into the world—the incarnation of the Deity, and did not abhor the Virgin's womb. He came into the world as the fulfilment of all the promises made to the patriarchs and holy

men. He came into the world as the substance of all the shadows, and signs, and symbols of the Mosaic Ritual. He came as the great deliverer of his people, as the object of the hopes and desires of all good men. He came into the world about four thousand years after its creation. It becomes us not to inquire with vain and idle curiosity, why he did not come earlier, why he delayed his coming so long. My brethren, whatever God does is wisely done, and well done. If it be asked, then, why Christ did not come earlier into the world; is it not a sufficient answer to say, that he came at the time appointed by God; and that as God is infinitely wise, infinitely just and infinitely good, whatever he does is altogether wise, and just, and good. Yet some reasons may suggest themselves to our minds. Mankind by this delay had witnessed the evil effects of sin in the world. An opportunity was likewise afforded by this delay of bringing to the test of experiment all the plans and expedients that could be devised for the recovery of mankind—and various plans and expedients were tried and failed. Philosophy was tried and failed—science failed—and reason held up her dim taper—and all failed. By this delay, events were prepared which were long marked out by types and figures; when these were ripened and when predictions received their accomplishment, a body of evidence was collected, more full, more clear, and more satisfactory than could have been obtained by any other means. But why, my brethren, give reasons for that which, after all our reasoning, must at last be resolved into the good pleasure of God? The Apostle has given the reason in two words; when he says, "That Jesus Christ came into the world in the fulness of time." Had the Apostle, then, in his mind's eye the stream of time rolling onwards and onwards, and carrying on its mighty bosom all the events and circumstances which occurred, all deriving their importance from their accomplishment, and this stream still rolling on till Christ appeared, and did it then bend backwards to the ocean of eternity where, ere long, it will be lost and swallowed up for ever?

Christ came into the world—God was manifested in the flesh. Did the Divinity, then, assume humanity? Did the Father of eternity become, as it were, subject to the revolutions of time? Did the Prince

of life become subject to the power of death ? It were bold to think that this is true, and yet it would be bolder still to deny its truth ; for truth it is, attested by all the evidence that could be sought. Into what kind of a world did Christ come ? Was it into a world of happiness, and virtue, and peace ? Did he find all its inhabitants ready to receive him with joy ? Did thrones, and crowns, and sceptres await him ? If it had been so, then indeed it would have been condescension. But, no ! He came into the world to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He came into a rebel world—into a world in arms against him, and that world he came to bless and to save. By what means ? By an event like which nothing ever before happened or ever can happen again. That it must have been for some great end that Jesus came into the world is evident. Some there are who say that the man Jesus Christ was raised up and endowed with gifts and wisdom that he might teach the world a morality more pure and lofty in its principles, and more powerful in its application. He is, indeed, ignorant who denies that there was a necessity for this. What was then the state of the heathen world ? Notwithstanding all their philosophers, and moralists, and poets, the great mass of the people was sunk in ignorance and error ; and if the biographers of their philosophers deserve any credence, some of the gravest of the ancient sages stand convicted of the foulest crimes. If such were their saints, then what were their sinners ? Then as to the Jews, what was their character ? what a degenerate race were they ? what was the character of the different sects amongst them ? The Pharisees, the chief sect, were declared, by Him who could not form a wrong estimate, to be hypocrites—whited sepulchres. The Sadducees were Deists to a man, and the Herodians were open libertines. The holy temple was wholly profaned, and was there not great need of a reformation ? But, then, perhaps it will be allowed that Jesus Christ was sent into the world, not only to teach a purer morality, but by being permitted to be put to a violent death, and being raised up again from the dead, to teach the great truth of a future existence. We own that this was not unnecessary. The ancient sages spoke well of the immortality of the soul, but did they not speak of it rather as a pleasing speculation than as a

thing certain or known ? Yes ; they reasoned well, but

"Found no end, in wandering mazes lost."

They looked wide over the great ocean of existence that was spread before them, but "clouds and darkness rested on it." And as to the Jewish people, though it has been said that their writings contain no intimation of a future state, yet if the gentleman who maintained this opinion had been as familiar with the Old Testament as he was with Italian poetry, he would have found many allusions to a future state in the writings of Moses. Yet although this be true, yet such was the blindness of the Jewish people that they wished to understand the Messiah's kingdom as a temporal kingdom ; they believed that the Saviour would place himself at the head of a victorious army, and, having conquered all his enemies, make Jerusalem the seat of empire. Truly, then, there was a necessity that life and immortality should be brought to light by the Gospel !

But, was this the first and the paramount object of Christ's coming into the world ? I speak with reverence and in the presence of God who hears me, and I say, that if this had been all that was required, then there was no necessity that God should come into the world. Then I would say, that one of you might have been raised up and provided and furnished with gifts for this purpose. One of you might have been appointed to announce a purer system of morality ; one of you might have suffered death and have been raised again from the dead to tell to mankind the certainty of a future state. I repeat it—had this been all, then there was no necessity that God should have been incarnate—that God should have been manifested in the flesh. What, then, was the object for which Christ came into the world ? The Apostle makes the reply, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Ah ! this was the object for the accomplishment of which he came into the world. Millions of sinners were sinking into destruction, and he flew from the court above, caught hold of the burning brand, and quenched it in his blood. He came to procure salvation for us by offering himself up as a sacrifice in our place. It was the appointment of Providence that the Son should assume our nature in order to atone for our sins. I cannot now enter into all the arguments by which the great doctrine of

the vicarious atonement is sustained. I am quite sure, that to those whom I now address, to those who attend this chapel, and to those who listen to the ministry of the Gospel elsewhere, these arguments must be familiar. They must not only be familiar to your minds, but dear to your hearts and to your feelings, by their efficacy, their virtue, and their power. At present I shall just mention one or two. I cannot account on any other principle but on that of the atonement, for what passed in the garden of Gethsemane, previous to the crucifixion of Jesus. To that garden Jesus with his disciples frequently resorted, and engaged in devout aspirations to God. It had often been a delightful spot to them. He repaired thither at the time we allude to. His three disciples were at a little distance from him; no foe, no danger was near him. It was then the cool of the evening; he begins to be amazed and very heavy; his soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death; and such is the intensity of his agony, that the blood starts from him and falls to the ground in large drops. How can this be accounted for on any other principle than that Jesus was surety for our sins? On the principle of those who deny the doctrine of the vicarious atonement, the grief of Jesus was unworthy of a hero. How many instances must occur to such of you as are familiar with the Greek and Roman history, of individuals who offered themselves to death for their country's welfare? Nay, I maintain, that, on these principles, the grief of Jesus was unworthy of a martyr in a good cause. Had he been merely a good man who had, in the discharge of his duty, boldly proclaimed the truth to a wicked world, and was now to be crucified, the conduct of Jesus was unworthy of a martyr. Oh! how many christian martyrs have outbraved death—in prison, on the rack, and in the flames, and have triumphed! I remember the case of a Christian, a female, who, when she was brought to the stake, and the flames were kindled about her, continued, as long as she could utter her voice, to repeat the words, "I am a Christian, I am a Christian!" How, then, are we to account for what took place in the garden, on the principle of those who deny the vicarious atonement of Christ? I confess, I cannot. But, on the admission of this doctrine of the atonement—on the admission that it pleased the Lord to bruise him for our sakes—that

the just suffered for the unjust, then the mystery vanishes. He hurled the mountain from a guilty world; He gave himself for us; and it was the dignity and character of Him who suffered that rendered the sacrifice availing. But you all aware that an unapplied remedy is no remedy at all; and, for this purpose likewise, Jesus came into the world that he might apply the remedy. To us was the word of salvation sent; and He who died on Calvary now lives at the right hand of the Omnipotent, to apply to us the salvation which he bled to procure. It is applied by faith to whosoever believeth in him. He saves us from the power of sin, by the power of his grace, which overthrows the dominion of sin. In this book it stands recorded, that his blood cleanseth from all iniquity. My hearers are aware that salvation is not merely a negative good—not merely a deliverance from positive evils. Sinners are not only made free from their sins, but admitted into the liberty of the servants of God: they are re-admitted into the divine favour and friendship, and brought into a state of union with God and the Saviour. The sinner has access to God through Jesus Christ, and walks in the light of his countenance; he breathes a high and elevated moral atmosphere. The love of God is the principle, and the promotion of God's glory the end of all his actions.

The salvation of Jesus Christ is likewise a salvation in death, as well as in life: it is a salvation against our last foe: "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" Religion is not only a light in the midst of darkness, and strength in weakness, but it is life in death; for, although the body goes down to the grave, it is raised again in immortality. I remember a very pious woman who used to say, Never mind the body; but, said I, Ah! but Jesus Christ redeemed the body as well as the soul; and the Apostle bids us "glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits, which are God's." Jesus is the Saviour of the body, as the Apostle declares in that interesting passage, where he says, that "God will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." Our corruptible bodies shall be raised up in honour, and united to God.

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In what light, then, is it to be regarded as a faithful saying, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners?" In what light is this saying to be regarded as true? Had I been addressing an assemblage of unbelievers, I would have had to enter into a long train of reasoning on this point. I speak, however, to those who believe in Christ, yet take one or two arguments to refresh your spirits and to animate your hopes. My first argument is this—It has been affirmed to be true by the men who were with Jesus. These men always made the same affirmation; whether they were together or separate, they affirmed that it was true. Before friends and foes they affirmed that it was true. When at liberty, and when in bonds, they still maintained its truth. When they were in prison, and when they were brought before rulers and magistrates, they maintained that it was true; and when they were condemned to death, they continued steadfastly to maintain that it was true. Now, these men must have known perfectly whether or not the saying was true. They had been intimate with Jesus for about three years and six months, and, consequently, must have known if it were true or false. Ah! but, it will be said, recollect that men have frequently been found to sacrifice the truth to mercenary motives. This is perfectly true: men have done so, and do so yet, for the sake of getting money. But I ask, in this case, where the money was to come from? Were they not forewarned that they would be persecuted and despised for the sake of the Gospel? Ah! but then, it will be said, there is the love of fame. I grant it: this love of fame is so strong, that it has been called the universal passion. Though there are some who are actuated by a thirst for silver and gold, there are, it is certain, other minds of a very different class; and with them the love of honour is the highest principle; and what would not such men do to obtain the world's blushing honours? True; but this could not be the case with the men who tell us that this saying is true. The course they chose was not the path to honour; nay, it was the high road of disgrace, and of all this their Master had forewarned them. Again, there are others who love a life of ease. It is admitted that this is true; but not that this could be the motive of the men who affirm that this saying is true; and the man who suspects that this could be the

motive, certainly knows nothing of the labours and perils of those holy men who counted not their lives dear, that they might preach the Gospel. Well, then, these men always and invariably affirmed this saying to be true, and they must have known whether it was true or not. As they could not have been actuated by unworthy motives, it follows that this is a faithful saying, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Take another proof that this saying is true; and it is this, that God hath affixed his broad seal to it, and God would not affix his seal to a lie. How has God affixed his seal to this saying? When the men who were designed to publish the Gospel had to prove that Jesus Christ came into the world, what did they do amongst the Greeks, the Romans, and the barbarians? To these people the sacred Scriptures were unknown, and, therefore, it was necessary for the Apostles to prove that they were accredited messengers by miraculous deeds; and they did so. They went to Rome and proclaimed that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Where is the proof? asked the Roman. "Proof!" says the Evangelist; "I am willing to give proof; bring hither that blind man, and, in the name of the Lord Jesus, I will pronounce the word, and his eyes shall be opened, and on his eyeballs shall a flood of day be poured." And it was so. Away they went to Greece, and there Paul preached the same doctrine. Where is the proof? asked the Grecian sage. "Proof!" says the Apostle; "bring hither that leper whose disease bids defiance to all medical skill, and, in the name of the Lord Jesus, I will pronounce the word, and he shall be clean." And it was so. They went to Athens and preached the same doctrine, and again proof was asked. "Bring hither," said the Apostle, "that dead body, and, in the name of the Lord Jesus, who is the life of the living and the resurrection of the dead, I will pronounce the word, and the dead body shall start into life." And so it was. I need not go on giving farther instances. You all know that these men performed illustrious miracles, giving sight to the blind and life to the dead. Thus, then, has God affixed his seal to this saying, to show that it is true.

Take another argument. I have a case present to my mind, a case with which I was acquainted. It was that of a person of

more than ordinary vigour of intellect and fertility of imagination—a young man of most fascinating manners and agreeable person. His company was sought after in circles into which, under other circumstances, he could not have entered. Alas! he soon found himself surrounded by those who scoffed at revealed religion. He had been piously educated, but by and by he began to read infidel books, and, after a few months, began to join in the scoff at religion, to the deep grief and sorrow of his parents. Infidelity did not improve his morality; he became debauched; disease seized on him; he was confined, first to his room, then to his bed; and, although the best skill was procured, his case bade defiance to the power of medicine, and the minister of Christianity was sent for. Never shall I forget how he struggled and strove with himself—how he went to what he called the religion of nature, and talked of moral virtue; but his conscience told him that he had sinned against his Maker, and that he had sinned against his fellow-creatures, and he found in his natural religion no balm for a wounded mind—no relief to a guilty conscience. He became more and more perplexed. At last he thought of taking up the long neglected volume—the Bible. He found in it references to the scheme of salvation through Christ, and he thought, oh! if this were but true! And he read and read again, and at every reading the evidence flashed more and more on his mind that this was the Book of Life, and not the work of man. He went to his closet, and having knelt down, he opened the Bible and read a passage like the one which we have been considering to-night. Oh! said he, if this were true; however, I'll make the experiment; and he prayed to the infinite Being to pity his poor creature, and to show him if this was the truth. An impression was made on his mind, and the impression became more and more deepened the more he meditated. He began to express himself thus:—I would believe, I will believe, I do believe, and I venture my whole soul, with all its interests, on the truth of the saying, that “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” His burden was removed, and he felt peace, joy, and hope, springing up in his soul. It was not long before one of his old fraternity came to visit him, and asked him if he meant to disgrace his companions; for, said he, I

have been told that you now believe in Jesus Christ. What argument have you to prove the truth of his doctrine? I know it to be true, said the young man, by an argument which you can never master. I know it to be true; for I have brought it to the test of experience—this Jesus has saved me. Ah! my brethren, this is the grand argument. I cannot now dwell on the arguments which prove the saying to be worthy of all acceptation. What is so worthy of a sick man's acceptance as a specific for his disease? What is so acceptable to the criminal, about to suffer death, as the king's pardon? This saying has been accepted by many. The wisest, greatest, and best of men have cordially accepted and embraced this saying. If there are any who are not sinners, I do not, indeed, see how the saying can be worthy of their acceptance. If we ourselves were to be excluded from salvation, I do not see how the saying would be worthy of our acceptance. But the saying is addressed to us all and is able to save our souls.

As, then, the saying is true, let us see that we are amongst the saved. It avails nothing that I speak to you about this saying, and that you hear about it. To hear is one thing, and to believe the record is another. When evangelical truth is shining around us like a sunbeam, let us see that we experience the saving power of the grace of Jesus Christ. “Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” Welcome, then, this saying, and you will receive the salvation of the Gospel.

All are called on to give circulation far and wide to this saying, and to contribute, according to their means, that men may go out and proclaim this saying to hundreds of millions of their fellow-creatures who have not yet heard it. Let us combine our energies, and send out the heralds of truth to the distant parts of the earth, that, by men of all tribes and tongues, the saying may be proclaimed, that “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” This will overcome superstition and sin everywhere. This saying the missionaries proclaim, and many have proclaimed it, and multitudes more are rising up to proclaim it. You have this evening an opportunity of aiding the cause of human happiness and of human salvation. “What ye do, do cheerfully; for the Lord loveth a cheerful giver;” and a man is accepted according to what he hath, and not

according to what he hath not. Remember the case of the poor widow; she put into the treasury her two mites, and in the smallness of the gift her poverty was manifest; yet, in proportion to her means, she gave

more than all the rest; and that which she did has been recorded as a memorial of her. What you give, give cheerfully, and out of a good heart, and God will accept the gift.

JOSHUA INTIMATING HIS OWN DEPARTURE, AND THE FAVOUR OF GOD TOWARD ISRAEL;

A SERMON DELIVERED IN FALKIRK PARISH CHURCH.

By the Rev. ALEXANDER S. PATTERSON.

'Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.'—JOSHUA xxiii. 14.

THE text forms part of an address delivered by Joshua to an assembly of the Israelites. The historian, in introducing the discourse, informs us of the age of the speaker, the circumstances of the people, and the character of the convention summed up by Joshua on this occasion. "And it came to pass," says he, at the commencement of the chapter, "a long time after the Lord had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua waxed old and stricken in age. And Joshua called for all Israel, and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers." The tenor of the address itself is suitable to the three several facts that are thus recorded by the historian. It was meet that an old and venerable man, about to leave the people he had led through the midst of so many dangers, and whom God had blessed, along with them, with victories and triumphs so manifold and great—it was meet that now when, for the time, the strife was over, when, after the labours of the way, and the bloody struggles of the battle-field, the long-predicted rest of Israel was secured—it was meet that, with the elders, and the judges, and the assembled tribes around him, he should warn and counsel them in such terms as those which on this occasion he employs; nor was there, perhaps, in all the multitude, a mind that could gainsay the appeal which Joshua made, nor a heart that could resist the pathos of his words, when, pointing them onwards to his own approaching death, and backwards to the care and mercy of Jehovah, he addressed them thus: "And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth:

and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof."

Let us consider, *first*, the circumstances of the speaker, as stated in the text; and *secondly*, the appeal which Joshua here addresses to the people.

I. Let us advert to the circumstances in which Joshua here represents himself as placed: "This day," says he, "I am going the way of all the earth."

By the expression, "this day," the speaker, perhaps, has no intention of denoting the precise day in which he was to die. He may only mean to say that, at the very time, on the very day when he was addressing them, his end was near—that, although he had not utterly withdrawn from the care of their concerns, although he was still acting as their counsellor and head, the time was now just at hand when his voice should be heard no longer in their counsels, and his arm lifted up no longer for their rescue—that the grave was just about to gather to itself his tottering limbs, and death to quell the vigour of his warrior arm, and God to lead his spirit to its rest. And whether you think of Joshua as Israel's tried and valorous chieftain, or fix your contemplations on his character as a zealous and devoted friend of God, how interesting are the circumstances in which his affirmation, "This day I am going the way of all the earth," presents him to your view! Do you call to mind his active toils, his glorious victories? Do you think of him as brought before us,

in his youthful days, the attendant on the tabernacle and the minister of Moses? Do you follow him on that adventurous commission which he so honourably fulfilled, and from which he gained so great a testimony, when he went to survey the land to which the Lord was leading forth the people? Do you contemplate him succeeding to the labours and authority of Moses when that holy man was gone—guiding the chosen race across the waters of the Jordan—heading the host of Israel when they went forth to victory; and administering the national affairs, until the people were in quietness, possessors, as was promised, of a conquered land? Follow him farther still in his adventurous and active course—follow him to its close. Behold his venerable form, whose younger vigour so often fired the battle, whose firmer footsteps so often led the march! Time has gathered death's memorials on that form; and warned, perhaps, by some communication from the world invisible, or feeling, it may be, in the pain, the weakness, or the gathering wrinkles, that his closing hour is near, he thus addresses the multitude around: “Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth.”

Joshua had now closed the long-protracted journey that brought the people to the land of rest; but he speaks of another *way* as still to traverse. The journey by which he and Israel came to Canaan was of a peculiar kind; but when he speaks of his approaching death, he sets the idea of *peculiarity* aside, and describes the close of life as “the way of all the earth.” This expression seems very comprehensive in its import, and may direct the view to a period as arriving to every earthly thing—to a termination as befalling whatever has its existence here below. It points to all the forms of life and being that diversify the world, and pronounces them perishable things. It speaks of flowers, and plants, and stately trees, as about to wither, and fall, and vanish from the scene where they flourished so sweetly, which they beautified so well. It tells of all the breathing creatures of the world, as according to their respective kinds and the various circumstances in which they have been placed, more slowly or more fleetly passing into silence. It points to man, in whatever region he be found, as destined to depart. It speaks of the earth itself as about to be shattered and

dissolved. It proclaims, with St. Paul, “the things which are seen are temporal.” It repeats the lesson taught so mournfully by Job: “Surely the mountain falling cometh to nought, and the rock is removed out of his place. The waters wear the stones; thou washest away the things which grow out of the dust of the earth; and thou destroyest the hope of man. Thou prevalest for ever against him, and he passeth; thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away.” It announces, like the prophet: “The heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner.” O solemn thought! We speak of *Joshua's* death; and, had there never been another in the world beside, the event might have given us a serious theme to touch upon; but, according to the statement of the text, what was dying Joshua but just the representative of dying man? and what is Joshua dead but an instance, from the midst of *ten thousand times ten thousand* of the human form, erect and strong, and animated once, consigned to mournful silence, and the human spirit vanished from the scenes of enterprise and life, where it thought so loftily or toiled so zealously of old? And if we commit ourselves to the pages of recorded history, and find them full throughout with the alternations of life and death, or mark the common course of society and providence around us, how many an illustration may be found of what to *us* is specially momentous in the idea afforded by the words, “the way of all the earth!”

Into the times and manners in which mortals have respectively *gone* that *way*, it would be unseasonable, perhaps, at present minutely to inquire. As to Joshua himself, he is represented in the chapter, where the text is introduced, as “old and stricken in age;” and this, though, perhaps, neither the most usual nor the most interesting of the conditions in which human life concludes, is one, in some degree, of peculiar pathos, and to several in this assembly may be one about which the feelings are particularly moved, on account of its being *their own*. Aged brethren, who are living still thoughtless of death and the eternity beyond, or, on the other hand, are ready, with heartfelt seriousness, to say, like Joshua, in the text, “Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth,” how affecting and im-

pressive to a thoughtful mind are the circumstances in which you stand! Have you a life of holiness, like Joshua's, to look back upon? Or are you so wretchedly deceived as, with self-applauding mind, to be recounting your deeds of charity, and recalling your consistent course of temperance throughout a long-continued residence on earth? Or have you the awful retrospect to take of a life devoted to gross and open sin? Oh! remember, young and old, and all of you, that, though the close of life be described as "the way of all the earth," its issues are not alike to all—that, though all be mortal and all immortal too, *mortality* and *immortality* are words of different import, according to the individual souls to which they are applied; and that, while it is a most momentous truth that, if youth or age, or any of the various states of man's earthly life would be safe and happy, another retrospect must be taken by the soul than that even of a holy and devoted life—the retrospect of "Christ and him crucified;" yet, nevertheless, it is an important thing, when age has smitten the vigour of the human form, for the human soul to have works of faith already sealed and approved of heaven, like him, who, when ready, like Joshua, to say, "This day I am going the way of all the earth," addressed to Timothy those memorable words: "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

II. We have considered shortly the circumstances of Joshua, as stated in the words, "This day I am going the way of all the earth." Let us now, in the second place, advert to the appeal which he makes to the people he addresses: "Ye know," says he, "in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof."

1. Joshua's appeal may suggest the idea of a pious and active old age.

Think not that, so long as life continues, the duties and moral obligations of life are at an end. To earlier years and robust vigour may belong the more stirring and laborious forms of christian enterprise and

zeal; but age has the same principles of duty to regard, and the same animating motives to cherish in the heart. In the apparent proximity of death, it has a consideration in some degree peculiar, to urge it on to zealous and devoted services for God; and, oh! how powerfully ought that consideration and many a motive else to animate the minds of those who, "old and stricken in age," are ready, like Joshua, to say, "I am going the way of all the earth!" Can you doubt that the death-bed has its duties; and that fit it is that, ere he leave the world, the venerable saint, like Jacob, and like many a holy man beside, should gather his children, and his children's children, round about the couch where he is yielding up his soul to God, and tell them of the goodness of the Lord, and by the tenderness of the scene itself, and the mighty motives which experienced piety cannot but have felt, and must in some degree have learned in language to express, beseech, and caution, and console them? And need we to be told, if we have lived among the holy of the earth, and read extensively memorials of the dead now glorified in heaven, that many a scene like this has been witnessed in the closing hours of men who have *died in the Lord*; that, in prospect of entering heaven, such holy souls have left a last and, by fit associates, not unvalued memorial to the earth of sacred counsels, ardent prayers, and christian character—that they who anticipated the company of Christ as soon to gladden them on high, have sought by their latest words below to advance his cause and magnify his name? And if, from the scene that more immediately ushers the soul into eternity—the scene of the death-bed, with its sights and sounds of sorrow, or, as in some lovely instances, its mild sobriety of grief, or its pervading spirit of *enjoyment*, shall we call it, sympathetic with the sufferer's joy—if from this we turn to the less prostrate condition of a man, not yet, perhaps, so near to death, but on whom age has settled with its wrinkles, and infirmities, and pains—to such a condition, for example, as that in which Joshua seems to have been placed when he addressed to the Israelites the text, another opportunity for christian action will appear, and many a motive may be found to enforce the duty of the old to devote to God the remaining period of their lives. Aged brethren, seek, while ye may, God's glory on the earth; seek, while ye

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may, the welfare of your fellows ; seek, while ye may, the perfection of your souls. Have you lost the years you have already spent ? O surely it must have been your crime, if, in a land like this, you have lived either grossly and profanely wicked, or irreligiously neglectful of your sins, your salvation, and your God ! Say we, then, atone for the sins of so long a life by fidelity to heaven for the remainder of its course ? God forbid. But if you have neglected the Saviour so sinfully and dangerously long, oh ! why should you continue still to neglect him thus ? If you have given your more vigorous years to sin, why should you delay with contrite and devout heart, to give the close of your continuance here to Christ, and piety, and God ? And if you have, in some degree, like Joshua, given your earlier life to the cause of righteousness, oh ! have you not found, in your experience of its dignity, and blessedness, and worth, a motive strong to keep you steadfast to the end ? That eminent man makes mention in the text, of the kindness and faithfulness of God to the people whom, under divine direction, he had led to victory and rest. By recording *their* experience and *his own*, he urges them to duty, and suggests a motive which, we may well suppose, was felt by himself as a principle prompting him to keep the covenant of the Lord. Aged brethren, act as *he* did. Like Samuel, when "old and grey-headed," "reason" with your neighbours and your friends "of the righteous acts of the Lord;" and, by your personal devotion and your sacred zeal, imitate that aged female of whom the Evangelist affirms, in relation to the time of the infant Saviour's presentation in the temple, "She was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she, coming in that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." What though the aged saint be of feebler footstep than of old ? Let him, if God enable him, frequent the sanctuary still. What though his voice be weakened, like his limbs, by age ? Like Joshua, let him use it for God, for souls and for religion, still. Though it may not now be his to toil laboriously, or struggle painfully for the maintenance of righteousness and truth, let him not needlessly be idle in the cause. Though his chosen place be

the scene of stillness and repose, let not the stillness of his life be mute regardlessness of the busy world from which he has retired, nor its repose the indolence of one who neither cares for others' souls, nor seeks the moral welfare of his own. And ye, my young friends, and all in this assembly on whom hoary age has not yet come down, remember that religion is for *you* ; and, having had your attention pointed to Joshua as "old and stricken in age," and heard so much of the duty and condition of the old, hear ye now those memorable words of Solomon, in which he connects an exhortation to a young person with what is supposed to be a representation of the discomforts and weaknesses of age : "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them ; while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain : in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low ; also, when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail ; because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets ; or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern : then shall the dust return to the earth as it was ; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

2. Not only is the appeal of Joshua in the text representative of a pious and zealous old age, but it expresses an important fact presented by the providence of God : "Ye know," says he, "in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you ; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof."

The fact here recorded is the kindness and absolute faithfulness of God towards Israel ; and if you call to mind the promises

made by Jehovah to the people on the *one* hand, and the mercies bestowed upon them on the *other*—if with the prediction that Abraham's seed should possess the land into which he himself was brought, and the promise to Moses of the deliverance of the people from the bondage and misery of Egypt, and the several intimations respecting the fate and fortunes of Israel made to *him* and Joshua himself—if with these you connect the circumstances that really befell them up to the time when the text was uttered, more especially their passage through the midst of the waters, the supply of their common wants during their journey to the land of their predicted rest, the delivery of the law to Moses for the guidance of the people, their victorious progress into Canaan, and their quiet settlement within its borders, you will be, to some extent, prepared for perceiving the import and fulfilment of the view that is given us of the subject in the text. Some of the Israelites, perhaps, expected God's procedure towards them to be, in some degree, different from what it actually was; but as to the truth of Joshua's affirmation respecting the strict and absolute fulfilment of Jehovah's promises, he appeals to those whom he addresses, in the emphatic terms, “Ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls.” And an explanation and enforcement of the appeal which he makes respecting the mercy and fidelity of God may be found in the following chapter of the book in which the text is introduced, from the second to the thirteenth verse, where, in an address similar to that from which the text itself is taken, Joshua gives the following summary of God's procedure towards the Israelites:—“Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time,” &c.

Were we to proceed with the history of Israel, and trace their course throughout the remaining years of their residence in Canaan, and thereafter to observe, with accurate and comprehensive survey, the general course of God's providence towards men, and thence proceed with the contemplation of the character of God himself as otherwise disclosed, we might carry out the fact affirmed by the text regarding Israel to the generality of a principle essentially implied in the attributes of God, and necessarily exemplified by the tenor of his providence. The individual and national history of men,

in connexion with the character and promises of the Almighty, must needs display his kindness and faithfulness combined; and in regard to some, perhaps, we might appeal for the truth of the fact that it actually is so, to their observation of God's providence in the case of others, and their experience of his conduct in their own, and address them in the words employed by Joshua in the text, “Ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls.” Of all men, christian believers, perhaps, will be the readiest to perceive, and the most willing to acknowledge the absolute faithfulness and the gracious liberality of God; and how can they but know, that, sad as the outward condition of God's chosen may sometimes be, and sadder still as may be the general aspect of the earth, to neither can the Almighty's pledge be broken, to neither can his promise fail? Oh! say not, with the objectors referred to by St. Peter, “Where is the promise of his coming; for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation?” Nor say thou, christian believer, “Where is the promise” which the Lord hath given of peace, and hope, and happiness? Doubt not that those are no vain words in which he has promised such blessings to his chosen; and let that important fact be habitually observed in the practice of our lives, that if we would have fulfilled in our experience the promises of good which God has made to his chosen ones, we must possess the character with which such blessings are connected, and that even believers, and zealous believers too, may, by the neglect of certain christian graces or the evil influence of some perverting principle, lose the fulfilment to themselves of particular promises of good, not because those promises are violated on God's part, but because it is involved in the very terms in which they have been given, that those souls are in a particular situation to which the blessings they offer are secured. Oh! let us all acknowledge—let us all depend on the faithfulness of God, nor doubt that he for whose fidelity to his pledges to his ancient Israel, Joshua appeals to their knowledge and their experience in the text, is a God “who keepeth truth for ever.” When or where did the Almighty violate his pledge? When or where did he profane the glory of his name? When or where did he break his covenant with his friends?

Christian believer, the mercy God has shown thee in the past, with deep-felt thankfulness acknowledge; the mercy he has encouraged thee to look for, in hope and happiness expect. Thou hast peace even here to hope for—thou hast heaven hereafter to anticipate. And as to the world where thy lot is cast, expect, while labouring for its weal, that a happier era will yet visit it from God; and if by prophecy he have declared, that, like as he gathered Israel of old to the promised rest, so will he gather them again, fear not the prophecy shall fail; nor doubt that, if of the nations he have said, that truth and virtue shall gladden them hereafter, the blessed transformation shall effectually and infallibly be made.

In intimate alliance with the text, Joshua refers, in the following monitory terms, to God's providence as engaged in the punishment of men as well as in fulfilling his promises of good: "Therefore it shall come

to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the Lord your God promised you; so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you. When ye have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you." Taught, then, by these monitory words, while on the one hand, we rely on the *promises*, let us also on the other, rely on the *threatenings* of the Lord. And, oh! let both views of his true and righteous providence have the influence in *our* case, which Joshua sought that they should have in Israel's case—come pressing on the heart, as motives strong to warn, and guide, and animate our souls! Amen.

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ON THE GREATNESS OF REDEMPTION;
A SERMON PREACHED IN THE WEST PARISH CHURCH, GREENOCK,
By the Rev. A. ROBERTSON, A.M.

'And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.'—REV. xv. 3.

IN the verse preceding our text, the glorified saints are said to have the harps of God. This phrase implies most excellent or holy harps, and represents the state of their minds tempered with joy on account of their happy condition, and filled with gratitude for the favours they have received from the King of saints. The song of Moses which they sing is not the same in language as the one he composed for the children of Israel after their deliverance from Pharaoh at the Red Sea, but the spirit of it is the same, viz., to extol the greatness of God's works, and the justice of his ways in delivering his people and destroying their enemies. The words of our text have a striking resemblance to those in the 15th verse of the 145th psalm, and contain the same sentiments, "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works."

As those who sing this song have obtained the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, and as they address the Lord God Almighty as the King of saints, the exciting cause of the song given in our text and in the succeeding verse, must arise from the contemplation of the work of Redemption. This employment raises in them the feelings of admiration, and these feelings are embodied in the words of our text. One feature in the character of redemption which engages their attention, is the nature of the work. It is a great work—great are thy works, Lord God Almighty. In this discourse we intend to confine our remarks, in the first place, to the greatness of this work, and thus to impress upon your minds that it is

a subject well fitted from its *greatness*, exclusive of other important considerations, to excite the admiration and awaken the praise of believers on earth and glorified saints in heaven. 2dly. We remark, that in proportion to the greatness of this work of redemption, so is the folly of those who neglect the way of salvation: it is indeed great.

The greatness of any work of art depends chiefly on the time, expense, labour, and skill required to bring it to perfection. The pyramids of Egypt, for example, are great works. A consideration of the massy materials of which the largest is composed; the ingenuity displayed in the workmanship; the time consumed in raising this massy pile; the number of men employed in its erection, and the expenditure for vegetables alone for the workmen, impress our minds forcibly with the greatness of this work, and furnish us with a satisfactory reason why it ranks as one of the seven wonders of the world.

There is no necessity in the nature of things to estimate the greatness of God's works by a similar process of mind. With the Almighty great and little are terms without meaning. With the same ease in which he sends the little insect to flutter its short-lived existence in the meridian sunbeams, can he send forth millions of worlds to roll in space, inhabited by an intelligent population. A fiat of the Creator heaved the ocean into its bed, raised the earth above the waters, lighted up the sun in the firmament, covered the earth with vegetation, and poured the tide of life into the various animals by which it is inhabited.

This is true; but it is equally true that in

the proceedings of God there is generally a manifest proportion between any work he accomplishes, and the means employed for that purpose. On the part of God this is not necessary, but it serves the most important purpose of impressing the mind of man. When this world was to be wheeled into ~~space~~, the Creator said the word and ~~it was so~~; but when man was to be called into existence, the Godhead is represented consulting on this important matter. When the old world was to be destroyed, the Creator could have performed this by suspending for a moment his supporting energy, and the countenance of all its inhabitants would have been changed; and by a continuance of this power Noah and his family could have been preserved amidst the general wreck with which they were surrounded.

This, and more than all this, could have been done without an effort by the Creator, for with him all things are possible; but, in the economy of heaven, works are performed generally, not in the way in which they could be most easily executed, but in the manner best fitted to impress the mind of man with their nature and importance. In one sense it was a mere act of power to send forth a new system to be inhabited by a responsible population, but when this same world was inhabited and the cry of their wickedness came up before the Lord, the sweeping so many unprepared beings from the face of the earth into an awful eternity made the destruction of the world a more important era in the providence of God than its creation.

Hence, at the creation of the world, we merely hear of God's surveying his work and pronouncing it to be very good—angels rejoicing as they contemplated the beauty of the world undeformed by sin, and the Son of God delighting in the habitable parts of the earth. But at the destruction of the world, if we may be allowed to follow up the ideas hinted at in the Sacred Volume, when this awful event took place, the joy which God felt at creation, is exchanged for the heavings of sorrow. In the lingering of a parent we see him striving with his rebellious children through the agency of his Spirit; reminding them by the slowly built ark that there was yet space for repentance; and, when their ripened wickedness calls for vengeance, the heavens are wrapt in sackcloth—nature mourns over the coming catastrophe, and heaven gives its tears of commiseration as the fountains of the deep are broken up to wash away the stains of a polluted world.

We think the inquiry useless, whether God could have redeemed man in any other way than that in which it is done. The fact is, we are incapable for such an inquiry. Our minds could never have devised a plan of recovery; and the one which a God infinitely wise has made known to us, we may be assured is well fitted to honour his character and secure the salvation of believers. Whether in connexion with this work there should be so many connecting circumstances required, we know not; but of this also we may be assured, that the wisdom which planned man's redemption would not encumber it with one unnecessary adventitious circumstance.

If we, therefore, find, from contemplating the work of redemption, that more attention has been given to the completion of this undertaking than to any other that ever occurred under the administration of heaven, from the analogy of God's proceedings in his works, we may conclude, that of all the others it is the greatest.

It is a very possible case that, from contemplating merely the works of art, we may form very inadequate conceptions of their greatness. We may not have minds fitted from education, experience or *natural talents*, to form correct ideas of their greatness. In surveying, for example, the largest pyramid in Egypt, we would be astonished at such a congregated mass of stone; but unless our minds were trained to architectural calculations, we could form no adequate conception of the time it would take in building, the number of men it would employ during that period, the mechanical arts it would call into operation, and the expenditure requisite to complete the whole.

We might marvel at the greatness of the work compared to the small erections of stone which we elsewhere had seen; but this would be a feeling in operation within our minds without any definite ideas. We would be wondering without wisdom, and marvelling without knowledge.

To put our convictions on satisfactory grounds, that the raising of the largest pyramid in Egypt was, indeed, a great work, though we could not do this from scientific knowledge, we might do so from historical information. Were we informed in a well-authenticated history that this massy pile was ten years in building—employed above 100,000 men during that period, and required more than £300,000 to keep them in vegetables alone during its erection, our assent would be given that this, indeed, was a great work.

In a manner somewhat similar we may

arrive at the knowledge of the greatness of God's work in redemption. In surveying the works of art, we may be incapable from the state of our minds to appreciate their greatness; but, in ordinary cases, the most of minds can be impressed with this fact by historical detail. What may be the state of our minds in surveying the works of art, actually is our mental condition in contemplating the work of redemption. We are morally incapable, in an abstract sense, to attain any correct notions of the state of degradation into which we have plunged ourselves by sin, and of the perfect adaptation of the Gospel to recover us from our ruined condition. Our minds are incapable, not only from their finite nature, to grasp the proceedings of an infinite God in the stupendous work of redemption, but we see it through a medium which diminishes its greatness and soils its moral purity.

Incapable, however, though we are from the state of our minds, to form a correct idea of its intrinsic greatness, we may attain, by the illumination of the Spirit, to some knowledge of its greatness from the historical detail given of it in the Bible.

Revelation is an unfolding of this mighty work in promises, types and prophecies, all directly or indirectly referring to the Saviour, in whom they have or will have a completion. Revelation records difficulties the greatest imaginable overcome—unfolds a series of events the most remarkable—exhibits agents the most honourable in active operation, and an end accomplished astonishingly great.

Within its sacred pages this earth is represented as a platform in which there has been and still is going on a mighty contest. The object of this contest is no less than the misery or happiness of millions of intelligent beings; and the parties engaged in this contest are the governors of heaven and hell, with their respective inhabitants. This is not an imaginary picture. If the Bible is a fiction it is a moral one, and the adventures are sublime in the conception, and romantic in the issue. If the Bible is a fiction (we use this language because recording the active operation of heaven and hell for man's destination) man, for whom all this activity was and is produced, is, in too many cases, callous about the mighty work which is going on, and which in its issue will place him either in happiness unending or misery indescribable.

The recovery of man from sin is not secured on the part of heaven without an apparent mighty effort; and, from the analogy of God's proceedings, this work of all others

must be the greatest. Review hastily what Satan has done and is doing to destroy man, and what God has done and is doing to redeem man, and say if redemption is not a great work. Satan is the prince of the power of darkness. He has legions under his command, and they wing their way over the earth, and enforce as far as they are permitted his mandates. This world engages the attention of Satan, and either personally or by agents he goes up and down on the earth as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. It is no poetical conception that he has erected his throne in the midst of the nations, and that as the prince of the power of the air he assails the righteous, and rules in the hearts of the disobedient. Satan is neither omnipotent nor omniscient, nor does he possess one attribute of infinity; but though fallen he retains all the attributes of a mighty created intelligence, which fit him for his station as the prince of the power of darkness. From the time in which Gabriel came from the third heaven in answer to Daniel's prayer, we learn that angels indeed "fly with speed which time counts not;" and Satan and his associates possessing still, though fallen, this power, they are capable to know the most of the events which occur in this world.

His legions, scattered over this world watching the events which occur, on any emergency may compass this earth in a very limited portion of time. By means of his agents, Satan in this way may know the *history* of every individual in the world, and direct, from the diabolical workings of his mind, his agents how to oppose the gracious designs of God and ruin his creatures. With a mind ever restless, and a revenge insatiable, were there not opposed to his plans a counteracting influence, the world would degenerate into a mass of moral corruption, and he would lead mankind as willing slaves captive to his will.

The power of Satan, however, which has to be overcome in redemption, is not the most material circumstance which renders it a great work. Man, by disobedience, has violated the law of God, and the same justice which authorized God to place man under conditions, required of him the infliction of the penalty annexed to transgression. The Word of God was pledged that sin should not go unpunished, and if he had passed by the sins of man without the disallowed law being honoured, the moral purity of his character would have been destroyed. That relative connexion subsisting between a God of holiness and the creature being broken by sin, he could not

retain such a creature under his government without a direct acknowledgment that the principles of his holy nature could tolerate sin. In other words, that he was a God of holiness, and yet could view sin with complacency in his creatures. The sin of man, therefore, had to be punished, or in heaven's jurisprudence sin and holiness are convertible terms. Such a contradiction in the character of God could not exist; and, therefore, the work of redemption must be a great work which exhibits him as just, while the justifier of sinners.

Nor are these the exclusive circumstances which make redemption a great work. Even though, from any circumstances in the providence of God, man could have been justified from the condemnation of sin, he still, from his own nature, was unmeet for the inheritance of the saints in bliss. By a mere act of justification mankind might have been delivered from Satan's power in another world; but unless they had regained by some sanctifying process the purity of their natures lost by sin, the holiness of heaven to their unsanctified minds would have been a condition more intolerable to endure than the torments of hell—a situation so dreadful, that some writers of eminence have supposed the punishment of hell in a great measure to arise from the wicked being brought into close contact with immaculate holiness, which contrast, in proportion to their wickedness, renders their situation proportionally more insufferable.

These and many other circumstances which might be mentioned, particularly the character of Him who undertook and completed the work of man's redemption, render it a work the most difficult in its accomplishment and astonishing in its effects. In exact accordance, therefore, with the proceedings of God from the historical detail given of the commencement, continuance and completion of this work, it is the greatest which has been undertaken since time began. Every fact in connexion with this work recorded in the Bible, leads the mind to the contemplation of events which have a reference not only to this world, but bring into active operation the energies of heaven and hell.

When the subject of man's redemption was discussed in heaven, from allusions made in the Scriptures, it seems to have produced an astonishing sensation. The Father is represented in the meltings of love wishing to recover man from the power of Satan in consistency with his moral character. The Son with cheerful alacrity seconds his wishes by offering himself as a

voluntary surety in the room of guilty man; and the Holy Spirit concurs in the contemplated work, by promising his agency to apply the benefits of Christ's purchase.

Nor is all this effected on the part of the Godhead without a deliberation proportionate to the greatness of the work about which they were consulting. The praises of heaven are suspended while this question is unresolved, and the silence is not disturbed till the "lion of the tribe of Judah," mighty to destroy but willing to save, offers to shroud his divinity in our nature, and to be led forth as a lamb to the slaughter to make an end of sin, and to bring in an everlasting reconciliation between an offended God and his rebellious offspring.

Nor has the work of redemption produced effects less astonishing on the earth when contemplated by the eye of faith from the pages of the Bible. No sooner was the promise of a coming deliverer announced to man, than the circumstances which followed proved the work to be worthy of the King of saints. Between heaven and earth there commenced a mutual co-operation of events, all verging to one grand point, and serving in some measure to remind man of that period when God was to redeem his pledge of promised deliverance.

On the earth a system of religion was established typical of the coming deliverer, and prefiguring the nature of his atonement. Prophets sung the praises of Emmanuel, and, as the important era approached, the world by a series of events was prepared for the glory of the fulness of time.

At our Saviour's appearance heaven and hell centred their energies in the land of Judea. Around our Saviour's history there is the profoundly mysterious and awfully sublime, when we see him at one time as a man of sorrows insulted by puny man, and again in the breakings forth of his divinity ruling the elements of nature, subduing the passions of man, and making Satan and his agents submissively obey his commands; and on the one hand receiving the ministration of holy angels, and on the other assaulted by all the combined malice of hell.

Oh! it was surely a great work for which all heaven is represented in motion—angels either looking on in astonishment, or actively engaged flying with winged speed between heaven and earth—a Father, tender in love, standing aside, while his only begotten Son, in whom the magnificent train of prophecy from the beginning of the world had its fulfilment, is walking among men in shrouded majesty; and they, ungrateful for

heaven's gift, nail him to the cross, while he, in the agony of expiring nature, bows his head and gives up the Ghost.

If the work of re-lemp-tion appears so great to believers, from the historical detail given of it in the Bible, what magnitude must it assume to the redeemed in heaven! With faculties weak, and information limited, we can, at present, have but a faint conception of its greatness; but, even under these circumstances, its magnitude is overpowering to the mind of believers. The inspired writers never attempt in direct terms to state the greatness of this work. They either, by comparison, show its superiority to every other work, or, reflecting on the dignity of the person who undertook and completed this work—the merit of those for whom it was undertaken—the attention given to its completion by heaven, and the opposition made to it by Satan and his agents, in the language of astonishment, they express their feelings, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends; but herein God has commended his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

With what feelings, therefore, must the redeemed contemplate this work, harmonizing so admirably the moral attributes of God, employing agents so illustrious, overcoming enemies so powerful, and procuring for them the enjoyment and continuance of such inestimable blessings. In heaven, tracing the greatness of this work, not merely from historical detail, but from an exhibition of the facts as they occurred from the commencement of this work to its final termination—not with faculties weak and erring, but giving the whole strength in the inner man, strong in its conceptions, expansive in its flights, and correct in its conclusions, they shall be able to comprehend every circumstance which forms the greatness of this work.

Then they will know the evil nature of sin—learn why angels were sent so often on embassies from heaven to earth—what constituted that mysterious something called the wine-press in the wrath of God, and what awful ingredients were mixed in that cup which agonized the Saviour in the garden, and in the agonies of expiring nature made a dying but conquering Redeemer exclaim, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Then they will know what took place in that important time called the hour and the power of darkness—when a

Father, tender in pity, but inflexible in justice, laid on his own Son, our voluntary surety, the iniquities of us all—when the energies of hell were called into active operation, and the Saviour, though willing to save, and mighty to conquer, felt this great and marvellous work so difficult in the execution as to force from him the thrice repeated prayer, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me;” and when the earth in tender sympathy, with her suffering Lord, and indignant at hard-hearted man, became vocal, murmured her complaints in thunder, shook to her centre, and parted her rocks asunder.

In contemplating the work of Redemption, from the historical detail given of it in the Bible, we found ourselves in the midst of facts too astonishing for comprehension, and now endeavouring to assimilate our minds to the mental state of those who sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb around the throne of God, we find our imagination too feeble for their expansive flights, our understandings too weak to grasp their ideas, and their words, though heard in our present imperfect state, unutterable. Oh! that we had wings like a dove, that, soaring above this cloudy region, we could reach the rest prepared for the people of God, and were endowed with the powers of a redeemed saint—that we could tell believers what God has wrought out for them, and remind the impenitent that they cannot escape if they neglect so great a salvation.

This leads us to remark, in the second place, that, in proportion to the greatness of this work of redemption so is the folly of those who neglect the way of salvation—it is, indeed, *great*. This remark is a natural inference from the proposition which we have illustrated. In heaven's jurisprudence the means and the end are so connected, that from the one we may reason to the other. If the means employed are great, the end to be accomplished is great likewise. Considering the greatness of the work of redemption abstractly, it may be supposed sufficient to gain the undivided attention of every immortal being; but, in many cases, facts convince us that it is inefficient to produce such effects. The inefficiency, however, arises not from the want of sufficient evidence being furnished, but from the moral state of our minds. Sufficient evidence must not be understood to mean such evidence as shall infallibly constrain every heart to acknowledge its greatness. The want of efficacy may arise, not from any deficiency in the evidence, but from causes in the mind to which the evi-

dence is presented. We have sufficient evidence of the greatness of redemption; and its inefficiency in many hearts arises from causes in their minds, which render every proof of its greatness inefficient. The very circumstance that the same cause produces opposite effects in different minds proves decidedly that the fault is not the want of evidence, but arises from some counteracting cause in our own breast.

That many are in this condition, we need not prove, as it will readily be granted, and we have only to expose the folly of those who are the subjects of this delusion. These assume a variety of aspects in the world, but we confine ourselves to those who acknowledge the Word of God, and profess to be regulated by its doctrines and precepts.

From allusions in the Bible, it seems that pride was the cause why angels were expelled from heaven; and it is very remarkable that the Tempter gained his end with our first parents, by the means which caused his own ruin. The experience of Satan in this case was employed successfully, to gratify his full revenge, in destroying the fairest portion of God's creation. By reading attentively the account of the fall of man in Genesis, you will find verified the saying of the wise man, that "pride goes before a fall." Not that pride was the sole principle in operation within man's heart when he fell. Unbelief was the primary principle at work, and this principle admitted into his breast, the high swellings of pride made him discontented with his condition and desire more than an all-bountiful Creator had conferred on him. We have not leisure, at present, to illustrate the topics connected with this subject; and, therefore, merely remark, that the adaptation of redemption to man as a fallen creature is astonishing.—He fell by pride, and he regains his loss by humility. The Son of God must not only humble himself unto death, but the believer must be stripped of all fancied attainments, and with humility, docility, thankfulness, and gratitude, sit at the foot of the cross while receiving deliverance from the wrath to come. This submission of all others is most painful to the unrenewed mind. As lord of creation, the pride of man is flattered: as a member of society, he is equalized with those of his own grade; but when he comes into contact with God, he is treated as one destitute of every attainment; and if he has whereof to boast he is mortified by the question, *What hast thou that thou hast not received?* Now, my friends, it is against these workings of the carnal mind that we would direct your

attention. The Socinian, self-sufficient, will not stoop to receive the humble message of the cross. The greatness of its Author, and the magnitude of the work he accomplished, are amply detailed in the pages of the Bible, and they are there stated as *facts* to be believed, though in their nature, in some degree, incomprehensible; but the Socinian, connecting his belief not with these *facts* but their nature, harmonizes the whole of Revelation to pre-conceived notions, and makes an erring finite mind the standard to try the outgoings of an infinite Jehovah in the great work of redemption.

The Arminian revolts from such sweeping conclusions, and gratifies the feelings of carnal pride by a mixture of truth and error. He acknowledges the greatness of redemption as to its Author, and as to the objects accomplished; but in his creed the carnal mind is gratified by reserving a power to man, which makes him less dependent, and robs God of the entire glory of the commencement, continuance, and consummation of this great work. According to this theory, there is a power inherent in man, which he can put forth and resist divine influence; and, however modified and explained, it has a direct tendency to flatter human pride, and lessen in the view of the mind so biased the greatness of redemption. Man has not only to be rescued from Satan's power by an act of grace, constituting justification, but he has to be rescued from *himself*, (if the phrase may be used,) by an act likewise of grace, constituting sanctification. These two parts embrace the whole of redemption, and the latter is as valuable as the former; and unless the mind is sanctified, the possession of justification is mere negation from punishment. The influence of the Spirit is as direct a gift of grace as is the vanquishing of our spiritual foes on the cross; and, therefore, every movement of the carnal mind, which comes in contact with the Spirit's power in renovating the heart of man, is a going forth of that feeling which expelled the angels from heaven, drove man from Paradise, and is unknown in the new Jerusalem, where the greatness of the *work* of redemption swells in increasing and unceasing praise the songs of the redeemed around the throne of God. Those to whom we have adverted, are distinct classes in the christian world, and we would now advert to a class widely spread among Christians, though not designated by a party name. The Socinian moulds the doctrines of the Bible to agree to his reason, and the Arminian compounds the matter between the Bible and human

nature; but those to whom we advert cannot be troubled with discussions at all; and when conscience remonstrates, instead of resting in a plausible theory to satisfy their mind, like Felix of old, they dismiss such unpleasant thoughts, by saying, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

The sentiments of this class may be resolved into two parts—conviction and comparative indifference. Conviction, which reminds them of past neglect and of a future reckoning. Comparative indifference, because there is a principle of commanding influence within their breasts which overpowers every rising conviction; and whatever this principle may be, it occupies the place which the Almighty alone has right to possess. We feel warranted, therefore, under such circumstances, to employ not calm reasoning, as this is not required, but to use the language of earnest expostulation. The whole secret of the comparative indifference of this class arises from undervaluing the *great* work of redemption. It does not affect their minds as a work of so immense importance, as some other objects which engage their attention. If this arises from an undue preference of worldly things, it is setting in opposition the value of the body to the soul—time to eternity. And what is the body? Organized dust, animated clay, the outer man, the mere casement of a valuable gem. And what is the soul? It is the essence of man, the germ of immortality, fitted to grow, flourish, and bear fruit for ever in Paradise, under the rays of the Sun of Righteousness; or to droop, wither, and die, and yet live amid the fervours of Tophet's flame for ever and ever.

And what is time? Indefinable as related to motion, in general terms divided into days, months, and years. Any portion of which chronicled in the past is remembered as a dream, shadow, or a tale told, which cannot be recalled—viewed through the vista of futurity, chequered with doubts, and its termination at farthest not remote. And what is eternity? Time, and yet not time. It embraces the past, present, and future—the lifetime of the Almighty; and all our floating ideas on this subject are concentrated in the expressive name of Jehovah, *I am*.

We would remind this class farther, that since, at some future time, they intend to consider the great work of redemption, that, in every sense of the word, now is the accepted time. We pass over the uncertainty of time, for this cannot be disputed, and refer those so madly infatuated to the

difficulties incurred by procrastination. Resistance now prepares the mind for more determined resistance in future. Habits are acquiring, which gradually will become more powerful; and the means of grace, which awaken at present, will be totally unavailing to affect the sensibilities of the mind hardened by successful resistance. The mind which has melted under affliction, agonized under the pangs of remorse, and been plied Sabbath after Sabbath with all that is affecting in redemption, and yet has resisted, is in a state inclining farther and farther from God, and precluding, under the ordinary means of grace, the possibility of a return. And, oh! if in this state the Spirit, resisted and grieved, retire, the man is left with his convenient season still in fond prospective, as with a lie in his right hand, and with a mind seared as with a hot iron; and unless a mighty effort is made, on the part of divine mercy, to snatch him as a brand from the burning, we have to view him moving onward to immortality, dissatisfied with himself—with redemption, and expiring with the wish lingering on his lips, Oh! that I had attended to the things which belong to my peace, but now they are for ever hid from my eyes! And is it difficult to trace an end so painful to a cause adequate to its production? The greatness of redemption never seriously engaged his mind, and inferior objects occupied his thoughts, till, like Ephraim, he is left alone to reap the fruits of his own doings. The minds of even the best of Christians are too little engaged with considering that great work which the redeemed family ever contemplate and ever celebrate in praise. The more the mind is assimilated to the moral image of God, the more will it revert to that *great work*—the source of present hope and anticipated felicity; and in the moments of pious communion or retired contemplation, when the soul of the Christian follows hard after God, and, ere ever he is aware, is made like the chariots of Aminadab, his mind will dwell on the greatness of redemption, and his feelings unbodied will find utterance in praise; and when in the mental conflicts to which every Christian is exposed on this side the grave, the flesh wars against the spirit, and he has to exclaim, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death," in the triumph of faith, anticipating futurity, he will rejoice that the time is fast approaching when he will be emancipated from his present bondage, and be able, unceasingly, to spend a happy eternity in the contemplation of the great works of God in creation, providence, and redemption. Believers,

when this mortal shall have put on immortality, high as your anticipations may be, they shall be realized: faith shall be vision, and hope fruition. Endowed with minds strong and vigorous, and with energies centred in tracing the facts which constitute redemption a great work, the character of God in redemption shall shine with undiminished lustre through eternity, and its intrinsic greatness be seen and acknowledged

in every event which occurred from its commencement to its completion. Thrice happy they who on good grounds can anticipate such enjoyment! and our wish and prayer is, that we may unite in swelling the song of Moses and of the Lamb around the throne of God: "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." Amen.

SOBER-MINDEDNESS;

A SERMON PREACHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE EDINBURGH YOUNG MEN.

By the Rev. WILLIAM PEDDIE,

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"*Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded.*"—TITUS ii. 6.

It appears, from this Epistle, that Titus had been left by Paul in Crete to do the work of an Evangelist, and to watch over the affairs of the Church in that island. In this chapter, the Apostle gives to him several salutary cautions and advices respecting the proper discharge of his important office. In the 1st verse of the chapter, he counsels him to "speak the things which become sound doctrine"—that is, at once to preach orthodox principles, and to enforce the practical duties of religion, that he might thereby save himself and them that heard him. The appropriate duties of different classes of persons—of the aged and the young, of men and women, of masters and servants, are then pointed out; and Titus is reminded of his obligation to enforce them by frequent and earnest injunctions. The peculiar duty which he was to impress on the minds of young men is, as you learn from the text, to be sober-minded; and as the advices contained in the pastoral epistles to Timothy and Titus are intended to be a directory to ministers of Christ in every age, it cannot be thought unseasonable, nor, I trust, will it be unprofitable, if I speak to you on this theme at the present time. May the Holy Spirit enable me to speak to you the things that become sound doctrine, and himself make the application to your own consciences and hearts.

In entering on the subject, I shall not attempt to give any very precise definition of the nature of sober-mindedness. The original word denotes soundness of intellect, as opposed to madness and distraction; but as literal mental derangement is a disease, and not a sin, the sobriety of mind that stands opposed to it cannot be the sub-

ject of an exhortation or command. The word is, therefore, to be taken in a figurative sense; and the duty inculcated is, that sobriety of mind which is of a moral description, and which depends, under the blessing of God, upon our efforts as rational and accountable creatures. Let me, in illustrating the subject, first point out a few things included in sober-mindedness, and then add one or two reasons why young men should seek to acquire this character.

I am then, first, to point out some things which are implied in sober-mindedness; and, in the first place, to be sober-minded is to be thoughtful and considerate, in opposition to giddiness and levity of disposition. The young are proverbially thoughtless and volatile. Parents and others who have had concern in the education of children have often complained of their giddiness, and of the extreme difficulty of arresting their unsteady minds for any length of time to any thing serious; but when young persons rise above the rank of children, and grow up to be almost men and women, we expect that they shall become more considerate and sedate—we naturally presume that, with more matured judgment, they will apply more closely to their studies, or settle to their business with a greater degree of attention and more steady perseverance. "When I was a child," says Paul, "I thought as a child, I spake as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Yet that thoughtless levity of mind, which is so characteristic of children, often follows us into youth and even into manhood, when it is, of course, more inexcusable and a more prolific source of evil. How many young men distress their parents,

and those who wish them well, by their apparent incapacity for all serious thought, and by an aversion, it would seem, to steady application to any one pursuit. They will fix on nothing, and will neither seriously reflect on the past, nor forecast the duties and interests of the future. They live only for the present, and act just as inclination or as fancy directs. There are some even who glory in this thoughtless and unsettled temper, and are proud of their careless habits, as if they argued some superiority on their part to the common herd of dull and vulgar spirits. Alas! these gay triflers may live to regret bitterly their present inconsideration. There is no greater foe to improvement, either intellectual or moral, than this same light, unthinking, volatile turn of mind. It argues ill for the character in after life of those who indulge in it now. It tends to dissipate the mind, and to destroy and unfit its noble powers for every thing good and great; while time, that precious deposit, put into our hands by the God of our life, and for every part of which he will demand a strict account, is thereby suffered to run to waste. How many young persons have been utterly ruined by mere heedlessness and want of thought! and how many have looked back with unavailing sorrow upon the precious hours and days that have been allowed by them to pass unimproved! the right employment of which would have made them expert in those branches of knowledge, or in those professions and trades, for which they now, in consequence of their inattention, feel themselves incompetent.

But let me urge young men to be sober-minded by higher motives. Let me remind you, that you were made not to spend time in mere levity and trifling—that you were brought into the world to glorify God and to serve your generation, and to stand trial for a higher and better life. You sustain most important relations to your fellow-creatures, out of which spring numerous and difficult duties, which have to be performed in such a way as to abide the test of the future reckoning. But how will this consist with thoughtlessness and living at random? How will the end of your being be fulfilled? How will the claims of God be answered by you? Above all, how will your precious souls be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, if there be not any serious attention to these things? Therefore, “Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Consider your ways and be wise.” Learn to restrain the propensity to put off serious thought, otherwise it will degenerate into a habit, and you will contract a fixed

aversion to every serious occupation. Business will then be neglected; the very outward forms of religion will be abandoned; dissipation will follow, and then ruin will succeed for this world and for the next. O that you were wise, that you understood this, that you would consider your latter end!

In the second place, to be sober-minded is to be humble and diffident, in opposition to an assuming and a self-sufficient spirit. The apostle Paul gives this salutary counsel to men in general, which, I apprehend, is specially applicable to those who are in the outset of life: “I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly.” Before our ideas are corrected by experience, we are apt to take up a most erroneous impression of the world, and of the dangers to which we are exposed in it; and many young persons acquire a fond conceit of their own wisdom, as quite sufficient to guide them in every emergency, and of their strength of principle, as firm enough to resist all solicitation to turn aside. They have discovered, it may be, in the different branches of their education, some quickness of parts. Being foolishly flattered by their parents and friends, they have come to think that they know a great deal more than they do, and that their judgments are quite competent to decide upon every point, and that they are able to manage all these concerns without the assistance or control of others. Hence they set up to be their own masters, counsellors, and guides. They do not consult those whose judgments are much wiser than theirs, and who, from longer experience, are qualified to give them sound advice. They resolve that they will walk in the sight of their own eyes, and in the way of their own hearts; and they are so confident of their ability to decide aright, even upon slight inquiry in every case, that they frequently leave no room for second thoughts, but act with the same precipitation as they decided with presumption. Such arrogant and self-conceited persons consider the interference of their friends as an invasion of their liberty—as an attempt to keep them in bondage, or resent it as a reflection on their good intentions. They become self-willed, heady, high-minded, impatient even of parental counsels, and reproofs, and tears; they hate instruction, and they despise reproof. And what is the result? That pride, in a thousand cases, proves their ruin. Launching out upon the dangerous sea of life, resolved to act as their

own pilots, they split upon those hidden rocks, of which they were warned in vain. Deeply do they then curse in anguish and despair the madness that prompted them to turn a deaf ear to advice, and in bitter experience feel the truth of that proverb: "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." This is no imaginary picture. Suffer me, then, with earnestness and affection, to exhort every young person who now hears me to lay aside this odious self-sufficient spirit, and to desire, and watch, and pray, that he be clothed with humility; for "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." Be assured that an over-estimate of one's abilities and acquirements, if it should not, by cherishing security, expose to danger, must yet prove an effectual check upon further improvement. It tends to arrest all progress, both intellectual and moral; for, who will seek to make new attainments in knowledge, or in skill, or in goodness, who imagines himself really very eminent already? "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him." Be content, then, to believe that you are not too wise to be taught, nor too good to be reproved. Be assured that the very first step to true wisdom is a conviction of one's ignorance, and that the best guard against temptation is an impression of our own insufficiency:—"If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise." When we are weak, then are we strong. Cherish a modest opinion of your gifts, and a deep humbling sense of your infirmities; be willing to take counsel from whatever quarter it comes; be patient under friendly, especially under parental, admonitions and reproofs; and, above all, have constant recourse to the Fountain-head of all wisdom and grace; and, by reading of the Scriptures and fervent prayer, draw out of the fulness that is in Christ, and grace for grace. This is the path to true honour, to respectability in life, and to eternal happiness.

But, in the third place, to be sober-minded is to be temperate and self-denied, as opposed to the unrestrained indulgence of the passions. To the young Timothy, Paul gave this counsel: "Flee youthful lusts"—that is, he exhorts him to abhor and crush those appetites and passions which, at that period of life, are peculiarly active and strong, that he might avoid those evils to which they would otherwise lead him. What these evils are I need scarcely say, since they are so extensively prevalent among us. Look around you and you will see on every

side young men whose appetites and passions are plunging them into intemperance and sensuality, and every species of vice; who are thus ruining themselves not only for the future world, but even for the present. You see them forming habits, whose chains it will be extremely difficult afterwards to break, and which, if not broken, will certainly drive them into irrecoverable destruction. How inconsistent this with true sobriety of mind! Reason condemns these wild courses. But reason in the mind of the victim of vicious indulgence is dethroned; and passion, like a furious charioteer, having taken the guidance of the soul, impels it whithersoever she will. See the slave of pleasure hurrying onward on his desperate course! See him, like the Chaldeans of old, who were said to be mad upon their idols, mad upon his appetites and passions, resolved to indulge his wicked propensities, determined to gratify his inclinations at whatever expense! It is in vain that reason lifts up her voice and speaks to him. Conscience may whisper, but it is not heard. The remonstrances and expositations of friends make upon him but a momentary impression at most. Set before him the intrinsic turpitude of vice, tell him of the loss of character it occasions, and of the eternal perdition in which it inevitably ends; all that is to no purpose. No! for I have loved strangers, says he, and after them will I go. Is not this madness of heart? And, oh! how many in the bloom and vigour of life are thus infatuated, who will indulge their passions in spite of every consideration that can be adduced, who wallow in the filth of uncleanness, and who drink with the drunkard, or who rage with lust! Dearly beloved brethren, "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." If there is any one here who has entered upon vicious courses, but whose mind is not yet so besotted as to be unable to listen to reason; if there is any hold as yet upon his conscience, and if any part of his natural feelings be as yet entire, let me beseech him to inquire of himself, What fruit have I of these things whereof I ought to be ashamed, for the end of these things is death? Have you ever had any real satisfaction in criminal indulgence? The morsel has been sweet in the mouth, but has it not been turned in your bowels, and become as the gall of asps within you? As to young men who have not as yet broken through the restraints of education, let me entreat them to resist the beginnings of evil. Do not dare to deviate in a single instance from the path of temperance and chastity; for it is thus

first that vice acquires that power of the heart, which it afterwards increases to a fearful tyranny; it is thus conscience becomes seared, and that the steps take hold on hell. Sin having first acted the part of the seducer, then becomes the oppressor, and, finally, the cruel murderer of the precious soul. Close the ear, therefore, to her Syren song. "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not, therefore, on the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men: avoid it, pass not by it; turn from it, and pass away. My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not, lest thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed; and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof, and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!"

In the fourth place, to be sober-minded is to give an habitual preference to eternal over temporal things. Sobriety of mind—soundness of intellect, eminently consists in estimating things according to their true importance and worth. Who would call him a man in the undisturbed use of his reason, who should prefer a shadow to a substance, a feather to a mass of solid gold, or a momentary thrill of sensual pleasure to years of health and ease? Now, eternity is of so much greater importance than time—the soul is of so much more worth than the body—the joys of heaven outweigh in value so greatly the mean and grovelling pleasures of the world, and the sufferings of the damned hereafter are so unspeakably more awful than the direst torments ever endured in this world, that we must pronounce him a madman who habitually gives the preference to temporal over eternal realities, and the chief place in his thoughts and affections to the former to the exclusion of the latter. But this every man does who keeps religion in the back ground; who inquires, What shall I eat, what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed? yet neglects the interests, and makes no provision for the wants of the immortal soul. Let a man be ever so wise as to this world, and manage his temporal affairs with ever so much success, yet, if he has made no preparation for eternity, he must be considered

an infatuated, demented creature. "How much better is it to get understanding than riches!" Let me, then, exhort youth to choose the path of wisdom; look not to the things that are seen and temporal, but to those that are unseen and eternal; labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life; place a higher value on the means of grace than on the means of sensual enjoyment; embrace by faith Jesus Christ, who is the way, and the truth, and the life, and by whom we come unto the Father; strive to enter in at the strait gate which leadeth unto life, and to avoid the wide path that leadeth down to the chambers of death. He, says Christ, that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul: all that hate me love death.

But, in the fifth and last place, to be sober-minded implies that we never put off to a future period that which ought to be done now. This maxim will apply to the ordinary conduct of life, in which delays are often dangerous. The counsel of the wise man as to every thing is, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do," whatsoever thou purposest in accordance with reason to perform, "do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." But I speak, at present, of the postponement of religious consideration. The young do not determine that they will never be converted, and never seek salvation through Christ, but they conclude that the season for it has not yet arrived; they, therefore, in the meantime, say to religion, as Felix did to the Apostle, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season, I will call for thee." They imagine, that when they have arrived at the years of majority, or when they have come to be settled in life, they will give serious attention to these things, and expect that, by diligence, they will be able to redeem the time that is lost. Oh! how inconsistent this with sober reason! Of every one who thus resolves, may say that a deceived heart turns him aside. The disposition to put off attention to religion is an evidence of dislike to it—of settled aversion to the things of eternity; and, be assured, that if the mercy of God does not prevent it, this habit will grow by indulgence—new excuses will be formed for putting off religion still longer, until the conscience be seared, and such insensibility of the heart succeed as will lead you to the most moving expostulations and the most tender entreaties to repent and believe. Besides, even were it not so, how does any

one know that a more convenient season will hereafter be enjoyed by him? Can we look into the future, or tell how long we shall live or when we shall die? Hast thou made a covenant with death and with hell? Art thou at agreement that thou countest so securely on what is so proverbially uncertain as life, and that, though every day young and old are cut down by accident or disease—cut down in a moment suddenly—you yet feel assured that time and space will be given to you, that you will have many years to repent? Instead of indulging the vain hope of attending to religion hereafter, be wise now; soberly prepare for the eternal world, lest God should be now saying to you, Depart, thou fool! This night thy soul shall be required of thee.

I have thus, then, as I proposed, pointed out some things in which sober-mindedness consists; it is to be thoughtful and considerate, as opposed to giddiness and levity of temper; it is to be humble and diffident in opposition to presumption and a self-sufficient spirit; it is to be temperate and self-denied, instead of giving the reins to furious passion; it is habitually to prefer eternal to temporal things; and, in fine, not to put off to a future period what ought to be done now.

And now what reasons farther shall I urge upon you to be sober-minded? Suffer me, only in a word or two, to remind you that you are reasonable creatures, and that it is the office of reason to govern the passions, to check the over-indulgence of appetites, to look around us and wisely to consider what is duty, and what is sin, what is for our real welfare, and what for our danger. He, then, abuses his nature—he degrades his reason from its high pre-eminence—he distinguishes not himself above the brutes that perish, who suffers appetite and passion to obtain the mastery over him, and goes on frowardly in the path of folly and sin. “In malice be ye children; howbeit in understanding be ye men,” to act according to the true dignity of a rational nature; choose wisdom, “whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace.”

Let me remind you, farther, that you are guilty creatures, but that the means of salvation are placed within your reach. Were there no hope—had we to sit down in de-

spair of being delivered from guilt and depravity, then it might be well to say, with those of whom the Prophet speaks, “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die.” But our case, though bad, is not desperate. There is hope in Israel concerning this thing: “For be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man Christ Jesus is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and that by him all who believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Surely in the Lord we have righteousness and strength, and a free invitation to appropriate both: “For whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life freely.” Now, were you ill of some violent bodily disorder, and were the means of life and health put within your reach, would you madly refuse them, and would you do every thing in your power to inflame the fever that beats in your pulse and ensure a fatal issue? Equally mad were it to reject life and salvation through Jesus Christ—to give loose reins to appetite and passion—to reject all admonitions to turn to God and to follow that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. “Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

In fine, let me remind you that you are dying and accountable creatures, but the means of eternal happiness are enjoyed only in this world. When the grave is closed above us—if our hopes for eternity have not been previously secured, the grave is closed upon them also. There the sound of peace and salvation is not heard; there, there is no act of pardon which is now past; but as the tree falleth, so it must lie for ever. “To-day, therefore, if ye will hear God’s voice, harden not your hearts.” “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest.” Life and death are set before you—the blessing and the curse. These are serious things, whether you consider them with sobriety and seriousness or not. Life and death, the blessing and the curse, are set before you. Choose, therefore, the one, and refuse the

now is the day of salvation.” Amen.

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